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# XLR8R

77  
May 2004

ACCELERATING MUSIC AND CULTURE

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TOP  
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## Frankie Knuckles

Burning Down The House

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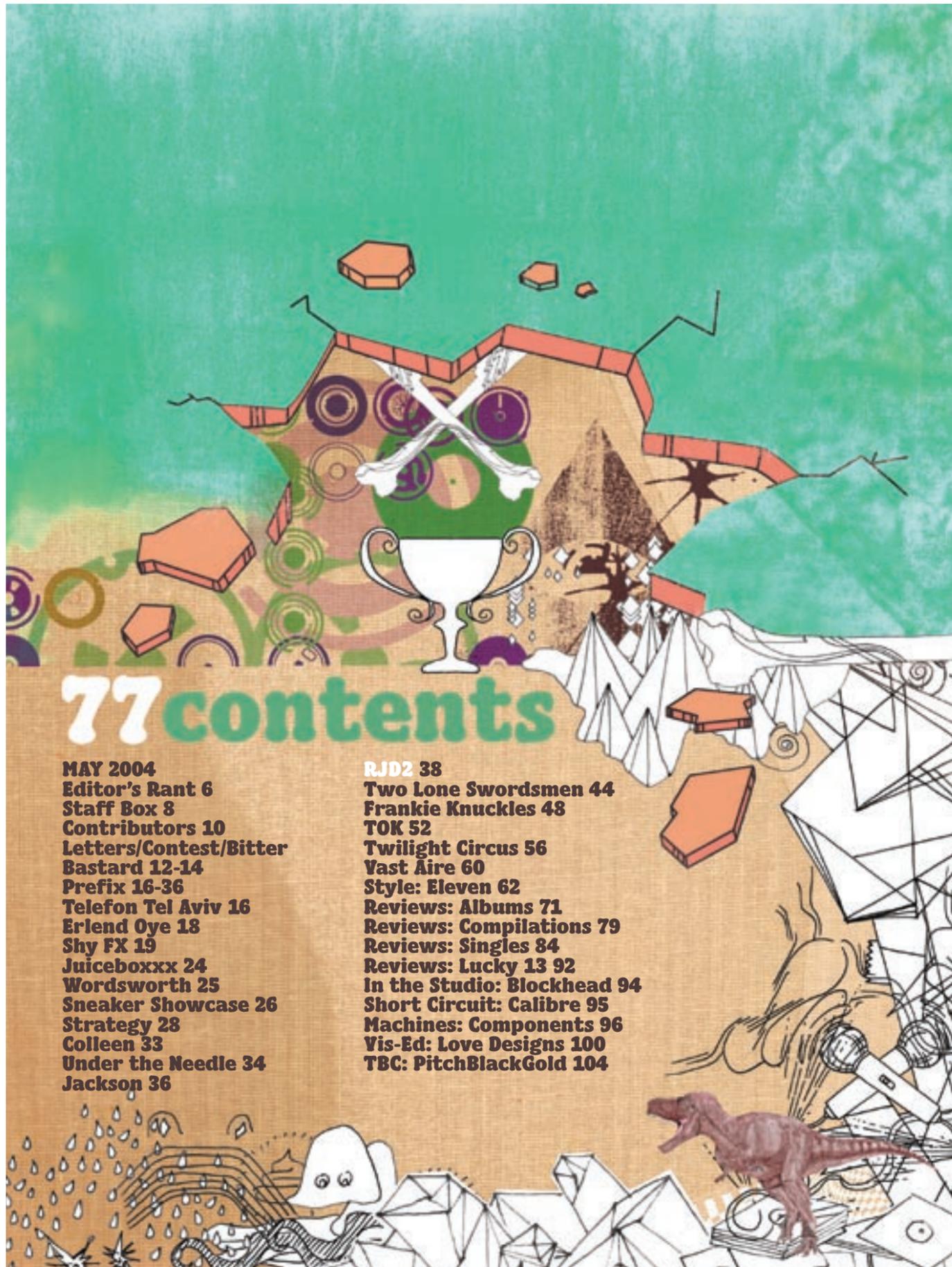
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## ED'S RANT

11 REASONS TO WAKE  
UP IN THE MORNING  
AFTER 11 YEARS OF  
PUBLISHING

TOP  
11

Dragging one's self out of bed isn't always easy, and just imagine what it must be like for a magazine publisher like myself with one of the most thankless jobs there is. Envision catering to a bunch of nerd-ass readers on one side (we call them the "chic geeks"), and then a bunch of yuppie-ass ad agencies and tight-ass corporations on the other. Here's the secret: follow that ass and kiss, kiss, kiss! Here's why I get up in the morning:

**OUR NEW REDESIGN** Oh Jon Santos, thank you so much for blessing these pages, you crazy designin' motherfucker! We have Mr. Santos to thank for our excellent new look and logo. Keep an eye on us; things are only going to get nuttier.

**TALKING SHIT ABOUT OTHER MAGAZINES** Hey other magazine publishers! Ever wake up and think, 'God my magazine is so lame and unoriginal and all I ever do is copy better magazines like *XLR8R*?' That's because your magazine is shite.

**WHERE ART THOU!** The music industry was our Romeo, but times are super tough, especially for all those indies out there. Every day I hope for new life for the record labels.

**BUSH GOING DOWN** I seriously wake up every morning hoping this guy and his dad's cronies will disappear from the surface of the planet. Stop fucking up this country!

**THE SWISS** Known for chocolate, neutrality and fine time-keeping devices, they also rock when it comes to principles of magazine design. *Danke*, Switzerland!

**DEATH TO ROCK** I know I'm the only one at *XLR8R* who can't stand new rock bands. That's why I founded this magazine, due to hatred of the "R" word. But seriously, why does it keep coming back?

**MARIJUANA** Love it!

**KILLING TREES** By now the total number of copies of *XLR8R* printed has climbed well into the multi-millions. That's some hatred of these tall weeds of the forest if I've ever seen it.

**WHERE'S MY FUCKING STAPLER!** Half my time is spent looking for lost office supplies, so much so that I've begun to look forward to it.

**THE INTERNET** So much better than TV, radio and the telegraph, but maybe not better than videogames and beer. Check us out at [www.xlr8r.com](http://www.xlr8r.com) if you haven't recently. We've archived over 2,000 of our reviews and a bunch of back issues. The miracle of technology!

**OPEN SOURCE THINGS** Linux is the most well-known open source software project, created by thousands of developers from around the world. We're applying the same idea to *XLR8R*'s design. Watch as we incorporate the styles of many new folks over the issues to come, with guest issues and special rockin' illustrations.

So, after many years, it's the thought of these things (and maybe a few others) that gets me to face another day. Happy 11th birthday *XLR8R* and congratulations to our entire staff for doing such an amazing job.

- Andrew Smith, Publisher



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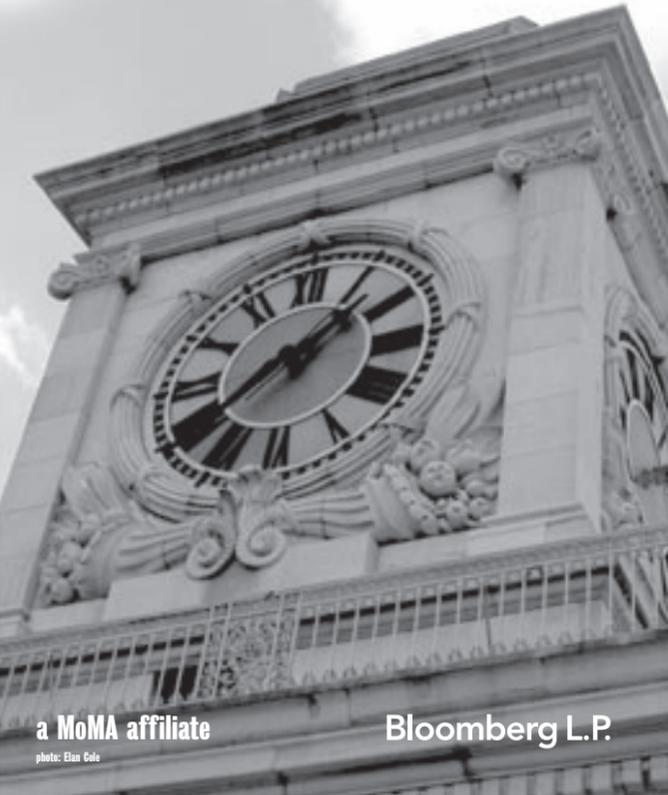
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**ON THE COVER:** RJD2 portrait by Doug Lee for Brand New School; based on an original photograph by David Naugle

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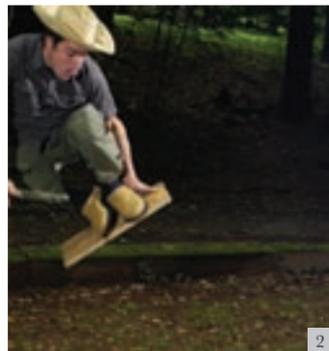
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Apparently, if you're a transplant to Brooklyn, you become an expert on where you came from. So Michael frequently finds himself writing about the finest music and art from his native Michigan. He has contributed to *XLR8R*, *Flyer*, *Village Voice* and Detroit's *Metro Times*, and he also works for public art presenters Creative Time.

2. DAVID NAUGLE

David Naugle is a photographer born and bred in the dirty South. When he's not exhausted from chopping wood and sorting garbage at his fort in upstate New York, he's shooting anything that moves and collaborating with other artists. His work has appeared in *XLR8R*, *URB*, *Alternative Press*, *Resonance*, *Grooves* and *ArtNews*, and he has shot for Coke and the American Lung Association. [www.naugleworks.com](http://www.naugleworks.com)

3. JON SANTOS

Jon Santos is from suburban Detroit, where he learned how to drive motorized vehicles around flat square mile grid blocks. After moving to San Francisco in 1994, he learned how to ride the subway and use buses. This technique was perfected in '03 when Jon made yet another move to New York City. He now walks more than ever. Jon recently engineered *XLR8R*'s layout and it's shit hot.

4. BRYAN WHALEN

Bryan Whalen (p.k.a. Cinnamon Underpants) first touched Californian soil in 1998, but the state's six-year rapid economic decline is purely coincidental. As in the comic strip he inspired and stars in, *Untight World*, Mssr. Whalen is well known for extolling the virtues of long naps and, ironically, sporty footwear. He would like to send big uppances to Jeff Jankaho, Look Records and Bely Gimlets.

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**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

Like us? Hate us? Write us! Email letters to [letters@xlr8r.com](mailto:letters@xlr8r.com) or send mail to XLR8R Magazine 1388 Haight Street #105 San Francisco, CA 94117. All letters printed "as is."



**SWAN SONG**

I picked up the latest issue of *XLR8R* and was shocked by the review of 2Mex's self-titled album. In the short amount of space dedicated to the review, she managed to throw in enough barbs to fill a novel. I immediately called 2Mex to find out if he had had a one-night stand with Rachel Swan and wasn't calling her back. To my surprise, 2Mex didn't know her and frankly, he really didn't care to.

What is most incomprehensible in this review is the comparison of 2Mex to Kid Frost. Comparing an MC in 2004, who represents the

genre of progressive indie hip-hop, to another Latin MC, who made mainstream gangsta rap in 1992, reeks not only of ignorance but of racism. Did you have to compare him to a Latin rapper? (Oh shit, he's playing the race card). That's as ignorant as comparing Eminem to Vanilla Ice. You don't have to like his music, but at the very least take the time to investigate what 2Mex is about.

An album full of throwaways? Hardly. It has had stellar reviews from incredible publications such as *Spin*, *URB*, *Mass Appeal*, *Elemental*, *VICE*, etc. Our support from mix-show and college DJs across the country for the record has been incredible—these are the true indicators of what is and isn't dope. DJ C-Minus of Power 106 (one of the only mainstream P1 stations banging underground hip-hop) stated, "'Fernandomania' is ill next-level hip-hop". Also, 2Mex does not and has not busted in Spanglish.

Paladin Super Co. is a company whose ethos stems from keeping dope progressive hip-hop alive by giving the artist the ability to record music at the highest level from the production standpoint, as well as marketing the music like a major with videos (MTV2), radio, and great print campaigns. We understand totally trashing something that is obviously selling out or just sucks, but if you are trying to make a name for yourself as a disser, don't do it at the expense of companies and artists that are really trying to do it.

But we shouldn't feel too bad—Rachel Swan hasn't written a good review in the last six issues. If she thinks Raekwon is passé, MF Doom is sad and sandpappy, Variable Unit is boring by the sixth track and Biz Markie's new *Weekend Warrior* is a travesty to hip-hop, then I guess we're doing all right. —*Tes Tesfay, Owner, Paladin Super Co.*

**Rachel Swan responds:**

Dear Mr. Tesfay, My job is not to piggyback off of what other writers—or, for that matter, mix show and college DJs—say about an album. My job and my obligation to the readers of *XLR8R* is to listen carefully to every album that comes into my hands, and write reviews that are personal, critical and fair.

Given the current tide of corporatism in mainstream media, I understand the challenges that Paladin Super Co. faces as an independent label. I respect your commitment to "keeping dope progressive hip-hop alive." Further, I did want to like 2Mex from jump, because of what he stands for. 2Mex's album fell apart under my scrutiny because, overall, it has a prosaic, mainstream-oriented sound. That's not to say he's incapable of dropping a cool idea every once in a while, but ultimately I found the album unsatisfying. I stand by my original analysis, even if it hurt your feelings.

Regarding your charge that my Kid Frost reference was racist, I made the comment in jest, and I realize, in retrospect, that it was

not a prudent contrast. We may have different definitions of the term "Spanglish," and I certainly didn't mean to use the word as a strike against 2Mex.

Nonetheless, the sexism in your letter eclipses the alleged "racism" of my review. You say, "I immediately called 2Mex to find out if he had had a one night stand with Rachel Swan," insinuating that, as a female music journalist, I necessarily sleep with every male artist I review and implying that my reasons for criticizing an artist would ultimately be sexual, because, apparently, I'm not allowed to have an opinion of my own. I spoke innocuously, but you spoke willfully—your obvious sexism is inconsistent with the values you supposedly espouse as a representative of a "progressive" hip-hop label.

Further, your charge that "Rachel Swan hasn't written a good review in the last six issues" is a gross misrepresentation of my work. And as far as criticism goes, if your ego is so bruised by one journalist who doesn't pull her punches, you need to check yourself. Whereas my review of 2Mex was critical, but fair, your assault on my character and your misrepresentation of my work is baseless.

With all due respect, Mr. Tesfay, I think you need to have your foot surgically removed from your mouth. You've managed to undercut what could have been a cogent defense of Paladin Super Co. by bringing your own wack gender politics into the mix. —*Rachel Swan*

**BACK TO THE LAB**  
AN XLR8R CONTEST

**TURNTABLE LAB 04**  
[www.turntablelab.com](http://www.turntablelab.com)

Around the world, New York City is thought of as a clubbing mecca, but the Big Apple is in a state of emergency. With the closing of both Dance Tracks and Halcyon, DJs have fewer and fewer places to actually buy new records. Saving dancers from having to hear "Shiny Disco Balls" over and over again is **TURNTABLE LAB**. The store—in the East Village near the corner of 7th & A streets—stocks the latest in heavyweight hip-hop, dancehall and funk, and they've just added a huge electronic music 12" section. To top that off, they sell fresh gear, including production software, DJ accessories, books and clothing. If you can't make it to NYC, you can order their wares off the web, and if you don't even have the freaking internet than you can check the other outlet for their good taste—their record label, Money Studies, which is famous for dropping that first Hollertronix mix CD on your domepiece. Turntable Lab has teamed up with us to give away some hot prizes. To win, just send us the name of one Turntable Lab employee in an email or on a postcard. Winners will be picked randomly from the correct entries. [www.turntablelab.com](http://www.turntablelab.com)

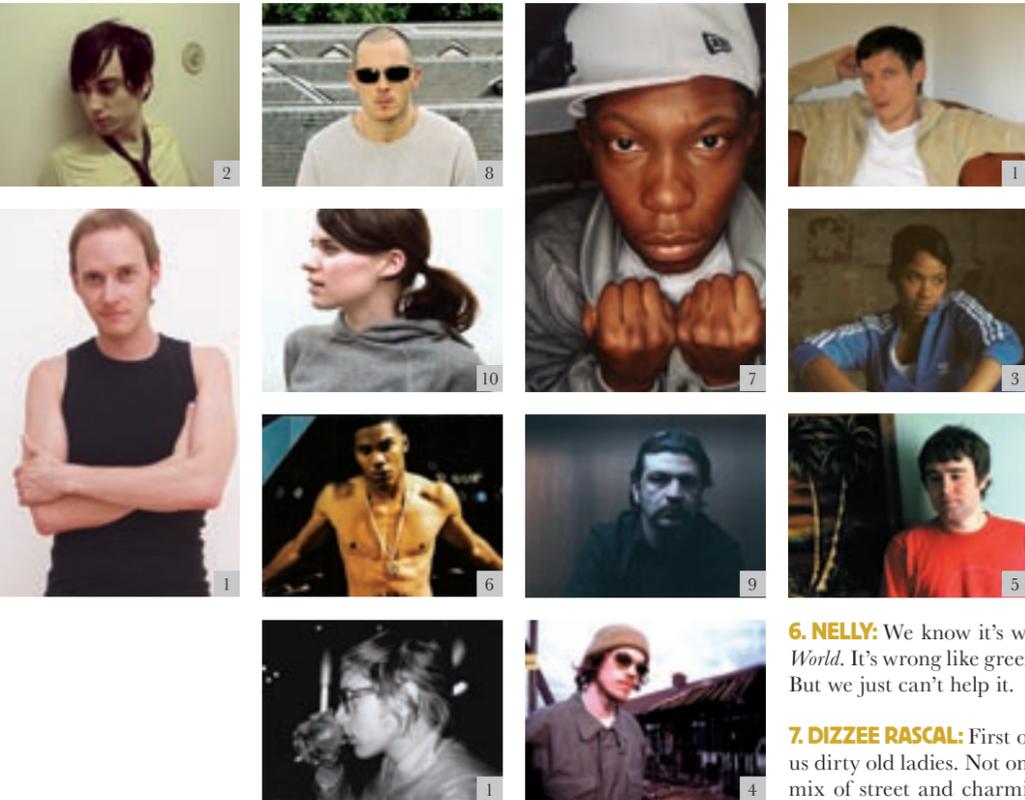
**One Grand Prize Winner** will receive a \$250 gift certificate redeemable at Turntable Lab's online store or physical location in New York City. **Five runners-up** will receive copies of the new MF Doom 12-inches on Money Studies.

Entries will be accepted via mail and email. Send your answers to XLR8R's "Lab Rat" contest, 1388 Haight St. #105, San Francisco, CA 94117 or email them to [contest@xlr8r.com](mailto:contest@xlr8r.com). Include your name, return address and email address when you enter. Entries must be received by May 31, 2004.

**CORRECTIONS** In issue #75's album reviews, we incorrectly identified an artist name and album title for Sol Uprising. Sol Uprising's CD, *Sol Power*, is out now. In issue #75's 2-step singles reviews, the "Contact: The Remixes" release is by Dallas, TX's DJ Love and was released on his Stellar Music imprint (not Rat Records). In issue #76's compilation reviews, we said that *Wavetec One: The Miles From Mars Mix* (Wave Music) was mixed by Rob Rives. It was compiled and mixed by Rob Sperte, François K and studio engineer Mike C. In issue #75's store feature, *Wear It's At*, the shirts from Boutique Fly are by Canadian designer Umsteigen.

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It's almost summer and the office girls are getting squirrely. They're hot, they're angry and they've taken to drinking at 4PM. Last week, they tied up BJ "Bitter" Bastard and put him in the office supply closet with paperclips on his nipples, packing tape over his mouth and only an old issue of *BPM* to read. And, since the publisher won't let them make a *Tigerbeat*-style fanzine full of electronic music pin-ups, they have hijacked Bitter Bastard's column this month and turned it into a vanity project of epic proportion. Here, this bratpack wants to share with you the artists they wish to drunk dial.

**1. KOMPAKT DJs:** Trying to choose between Michael Mayer in his hot little wife-beater, kinky nerd Superpitcher and speaker fucker Reinhard Voigt (even his name sounds dirty) is impossible. We want them all like a turkey, bacon and avocado club sando in which we are the slices of bread.

**2. JIMMY EDGAR:** Jimmy combines homespun Midwest goodness with that whole gay/straight thing that really pisses off "hetero" guys because it drives the ladies wild. Plus, he makes being 120 pounds in eyeliner hot.

**3. JEAN GRAE:** If we were ever looking for an good hate fuck we would just bypass all these wussbags and go straight to Jean Grae. She's fine, she's got mass NYC attitude and she has some line on her last EP that goes "Fuck you, fuck you, fuck you, I hate you." Damn, is that Slug over there in the corner crying?

**4. PREFUSE 73:** Yes, his hair looks like your grand-ma's. But we like to imagine that we're petting it like soft kitten fur as he says things like, "I really love living in Bar-thay-lona" and "Forget tapas. I want to tap that ass."

**5. DNTEL:** You see Jimmy Tamborello in his thrift-store country & western shirt and you just want to take him home and make him bake you gingersnap cookies, make tunes about you and rub your feet when you come home from work.

**6. NELLY:** We know it's wrong. It's wrong like Trishelle from the *Real World*. It's wrong like green ketchup. It's wrong like eating human flesh. But we just can't help it.

**7. DIZZEE RASCAL:** First of all, he's 19, which is quite a magical age to us dirty old ladies. Not only can he rap his ass off but he's got that nice mix of street and charming, and when he rhymes "Tropicana" with "bananah" it gives us a mental stiffy. And did we mention he likes E-40? He is, like, so in there.

**8. DJ ZINC:** Rrrrow. After all the pasty white drum & bass dongs we've put in the magazine over the years, it's a pleasure looking at Zinc's press photos. And the fact that he said a big fuck you to d&b rules, started 2-step/breaks label Bingo and then had everyone crawling to him for dubs is so boss. We wanna ride in his drop-top Audi TT and we know how to drive stick.

**9. ARNAUD REBOTINI (BLACK STROBE):** Yeah, we know. We were scared by the whole Latvian prison warden look too. But he makes good music and he can open a Red Stripe by repeatedly smashing the bottle cap against the side of a table. Plus we feel quite certain he has a dungeon in his house; he's dark like that.

**10. WYNNE GREENWOOD (TRACY & THE PLASTICS):** Sometimes we dream of looking stylish in sweatpants, growing out our bikini lines and (sob) just being appreciated for who we really are. This dream could be achieved by living in a cute Olympia A-frame with Wynne, creating art punk by day and at night running around the backyard naked, our boobs flapping in the wind.





# TELEFON TEL AVIV

**COLD, SECLUDED BASEMENTS COAX FORTH THIS CHICAGO OUTFIT'S LUSH AND SOMBER SOUNDS.**

If you think a laptop could not possibly create the perfect soundtrack to breakups, teary eyes on sun-filled days and introspective moonlit strolls, you haven't heard Telefon Tel Aviv's *Map Of What Is Effortless* (Hefty). The follow-up to the Chicago duo's 2001 debut, *Fahrenheit Fair Enough*, *Map Of...* proves that Joshua Eustis and Charles Cooper are geniuses when it comes to coaxing profound harmonies from their tiny computers. And as for the LP's haunting sense of vacancy? That's not production; it's personal.

"Through the course of working on this record, the winter hit us really hard and everything kind of just spiraled out of control," explains Eustis. "Personal lives got put on hold and everything kind of fell apart around us. It became a nasty time in Chicago in this dark, dirty basement [studio]. Very quickly, the record started sounding really, really dark."

Though there are plenty of somber moments spread over the album's nine tracks, *Map Of...* isn't stark or maudlin. The voices of Lindsay Anderson (L'Altra) and LA songwriter Damon Aaron add gulps of fresh air, as on "My Week Beats Your Year," where Anderson utters light-hearted banter over subwoofer bumps. Elsewhere, string arrangements and diverse samples of live instrumentation attest to the expansive musical vision of these New Orleans-born multi-instrumentalists.

Bridging the chasm between mainstream radio hits and renegade glitch, TTA infuses pop song structure with digital texture, or maybe it's the other way around. "[On this record], we weren't just trying to make some senseless pop drivel," says Cooper, explaining the previously instrumental-only act's decision to use vocalists. "We were trying to operate within the confines of pop and expand those things out a little further."

Few people would emerge from a year in a basement so unscathed, but Eustis and Cooper's friendship is only stronger for the time in seclusion. "When it's time to work and we're there sitting at the computer together, it's quiet," Cooper says. "We're laughing, talking, getting through it together. We rarely disagree on things musically and when we do it's usually something important that one or the other person should listen to." Still, don't think their music is a map of something effortless. "There's no room to be lazy in this band," states Cooper. "If you [are], you're going to hear about it!" *Matthew Newton*

PHOTOGRAPH *Christopher Woodcock*

▲ Brett Calzada (drums), Damon Aaron (vocals), Charlie Cooper (bass, guitar, programming), Lindsay Anderson (vocals), Joshua Eustis (keyboards, guitar, programming)

[www.telefontelaviv.com](http://www.telefontelaviv.com); [www.heftyrecords.com](http://www.heftyrecords.com)

# OBSESSIONS: ERLEND ØYE

Berlin-based Norwegian **Erlend Øye** first appeared as half of the folk outfit Kings of Convenience, but soon he might simply be known as everyone's favorite bespectacled, singing DJ. Debuting his soft and unassuming tones over the house of Røyksopp, Øye stunned listeners with a post-modern, Simon and Garfunkel croon that could break your heart and make you boogie. Last year he dropped his solo debut—the electro-pop album *Unrest*—and he's just released an infectious DJ Kicks compilation featuring Avenue D, Phoenix and plenty of the voice we love him for. We called him up to see what makes his world turn. *Melissa Wheeler PHOTOGRAPH Ali Kepenek*

## ERLEND ØYE ON MAPS

I've always been very excited about looking at maps because they seem to represent the furthest outline of any adventure. On a map, somewhere between those boundaries, the great stories of your life will unravel. And when you're 11, you have no idea if your life will take you to South America or to Miami! My friend Eirik was just saying if people in junior high school knew that I was going to go to Miami to DJ when I was 28, I would have been the coolest kid in school.

www.erlendoye.com



# SHY FX

AIN'T NO HALF-STEPPIN'  
FOR LONDON'S CHART-  
TOPPING DANCEFLOOR  
DRUM & BASS DON.



# SPIN CYCLE

The **National Hip-Hop Political Convention** brings together civil rights leaders with the voices of hip-hop to create a new political agenda. **Public Enemy, Dead Prez, The Coup** and author **Bakari Kitawa** will appear at the event, held June 16-18 at Rutgers University in Newark, New Jersey • News from the ward: Hospital's **London Elektric** will be releasing a live DVD, *Live Gravy*, this month, while **High Contrast** is preparing his second album due out in June • The fourth annual **Dedbeat Festival** recently wrapped up in Norfolk, England, with **LFO**, the **Big Dada** camp, **Amp Fiddler, Ectomorph, Theo Parrish** and more • Representing the UK's **Wall of Sound** label, **Kid 606** and **Big Youth** were recently in Jamaica collaborating with dancehall artists • On April 1st, Brooklyn's long-running DJ lounge/gallery **Halcyon** closed its doors at 227 Smith St.; they will be reopening in a larger space in January 2005 • **Christopher Lawrence** recently launched his own label, Pharmacy Music • Soccer moms, beware: **Dilated Peoples**, hip-hop video director **Dave Meyers** and **LL Cool J** all feature in the ad campaign for the Volvo S40 • **Out Hud, Clear Horizon, Dean Roberts** and **Stars of the Lid** are working on new albums for Cranky Records • **Tigersushi** has just released a record of underground French music from the late '70s/early '80s compiled by **Marc Collin** and Black Strobe's **Ivan Smaghe** (*So Young But So Cold*), and new music from Scottish no-wave artist **Park Attack** and avant-garde punk **Sir Alice • Beards** are the new trend for New York PR guys • **Cursive, Denali, Saul Williams** and **Mike Park** are traveling the US through June 9 on the Plea for Peace tour, designed to educate youth on the importance of voting • On May 3, **4AD** will

release *Waves of Mutilation*, a "best of" **Pixies** CD, along with a DVD of videos and documentaries about the band • **!!!** and the **Beastie Boys** have new albums out in June • Raving Dutchmen: Check out new labels from Holland including **M.O.U.T.**, which offers an antidote to jazzy dance music with banging rave tunes, techno imprint **M>O>S** (A&Red by **Aroy Dee**) and electro powerhouse **BlackLabel** • Screw duckies and bunnies: **Infantile** (www.infantile.com) is a new line of baby t-shirts designed by artists like **Evan Hecox, Jeremy Fish** and **Maya Hayuk** • Guitarist **Sara Jaffe** has left **Erase Errata**; they will continue as a trio with lead singer **Jenny Hoyston** picking up the axe • Royal Elastics is hosting *Streetwise 3* at L.A. gallery The Lab 101. Each month (through August 14), a different group of urban artists will be taking over the gallery, including the **London Police, Doze, Michael Leon** and **Dez Einswell** • Get ready for **The Cure** revival • Digital magazine, analog eyes: check online zine **www.intothestorm.com** • **Compost Records** has a hot new limited edition skull DJ bag out designed by Stüssy and Slam Jam; snap it up at **www.compost-rec.com** • The new Myspace: check out the latest in web networking at **www.netomat.net** • Get ready for a cruel, cruel summer...

Clockwise from left: **The Coup's Pam and Boots, Kid 606**, artwork by **London Police, Erase Errata, Theo Parrish, Saul Williams, Ectomorph, The Cure**

If there's one thing Shy FX can't stand, it's a trainspotter. "What is that about?" he asks of the heads who insist on standing motionless next to the DJ booth. "I've never understood that mentality. Whenever I'm in the club, you'll always see me brocking out, dancing. There's no point doing this music if you can't feel it, you know?"

Few producers are being so thoroughly felt these days as Shy, who, alongside partner T-Power, has crafted some of the biggest tunes of the Naughties. From 2002's Latin soul anthem "Shake Ur Body"—which reached number seven on the British singles charts—to this year's ragga smash "Murderation" (released under the name Ebony Dubsters), the London-based producers are running things at both ends of the drum & bass spectrum, lighting up dilettantes and hardcore d&b fans alike.

"Shy's a cool guy," says Grooverider of his 27-year-old colleague. "When he's not playing, he's coming out to the clubs and doing his homework, and that's why he's as good as he is. If you were going to give out awards for the best artist over the last two years, Shy and T-Power would win all of them."

2004 has found the producers further upping their strike rate with "Murderation," a roughneck roller that's endeared them to the soldiers who'd begged off the bandwagon after "Shake Ur Body." "After two years of hearing ["Shake Ur Body"], I started to disassociate myself from [it]," admits Shy (born Andre Williams). "The great thing about the track is how many people it brought back into the scene, but then I'd get people questioning why I'd made it. I suppose I can't blame people for doubting me—but seeing my track record, they should have had more faith."

It says something about drum & bass' baffling insularity that heads would question Shy. In the decade since the release of 1994's canonical "Original Nuttah," the East London native has proven himself the genre's premier innovator, whether cementing the template for jump-up (with 1996's "The Shit"), presaging the electro revival (on 1998's "Bambaataa") or pushing intros past the point of pomposity (2003's "Power of Ra").

Given the scene's current fascination with all things Jamaican, it's fitting to find Shy at the forefront of the ragga renaissance, but while the producer is gratified to see his pet sound regaining notoriety, he's wary of artists engaging in the style for nostalgia's sake. With hordes of bedroom beatmakers dropping downloaded toasts over carbon-copied riddims, much of what passes for ragga these days is offensively glib. "A lot of producers making those tunes have no real understanding of what

they're doing," laments Shy. "You have to be careful of what type of vocalists you use and what kind of lyrics you use. You don't just put [the word] 'bombaclaaf' in a tune and leave it at that. If you weren't brought up on the whole dancehall thing and you don't understand it, you shouldn't go there."

Shy aims to set the ragga record straight with his new label, Ebony Dubs, one of three new imprints he's established over the last year. According to the entrepreneur, Music Lounge will be reserved for liquid funk tunes while Deep Thoughts will showcase chopped-up technical tracks for the edit-minded junglist.

With a half-dozen singles in the can and albums in the works for MC Skibadee and "Shake Ur Body" vocalist Di, 2004 promises to be the biggest year yet for Shy, an affable chap who's timid in name only. Asked how long he sees himself keeping up his staggering rate of production, the Londoner avers that he sees no reason to stop—not even for a vacation.

"I never take a break from writing tunes," he says with a hearty laugh. "Even when I'm away on holiday, I'm always on my laptop making beats. This isn't just music for me—it's life." *Martin Turenne*

www.shyfxandtpower.com



## METAL VERSUS MONSTERS

A jaunt through New York galleries today entails run-ins with dragons, post-Columbine goths, disemboweled gorillas and sinister suburban landscapes. Call it monster art.

Yet while young artists are hyped to draw from heavy metal iconography and '70s horror flicks, rigid boundaries still separate the film, music and art worlds. Musicians in particular (with rare exceptions like Christian Marclay and Lee Ranaldo) struggle to bridge the chasm between visual art and sound. Making this division less distinct is New York's Angelblood, whose work lurks in monster art's darkest regions.

Formed in 2000 by artists Lizzi Bougatos and Rita Ackerman, Angelblood's six members play at the bleeding-finger velocity of Norwegian metal bands like Ulver and Satyricon. On their latest record, *Labia Minora*, Bougatos and Ackerman counter the speed with rhythmic chanting and growls reminiscent of a hyperventilating Debbie Harry or even Mumm-Ra the Everliving.

It's hard not to imagine *Labia Minora* as the soundtrack to a deep woods ritual—in fact, it sometimes is. Angelblood often creates collaborative site-specific installations and artwork for its performances. Some of the "tour ephemera" recently exhibited at Printed Matter in New York included fur skins crisscrossed with nails, tarot cards collaged with porn mag cutouts and a tambourine outfitted with razor blades.

Recalling writer Robert Anton Wilson's mystical anarchism, Angelblood's aesthetic reflects its prurient interest in pagan ritual, primordial experience and good versus evil. "As an artist you always want to get your hands dirty and milk a ritual for all that it's worth," says Bougatos, reflecting on the impulsive intensity of Angelblood performances.

So far Angelblood has cast a spell on the art and music worlds, garnering a slot at All Tomorrow's Parties and commissions from European and American galleries. The Slayer references, however, may be lost on the 40-and-up crowd. *Michael Haggerty*

[www.printedmatter.org](http://www.printedmatter.org)



# FANTASY ISLAND



▲ Fans dressed as Final Fantasy characters (left to right) Paine, Lulu and Yuna

There's really nothing that warms my heart more than arriving at an event and seeing hundreds of people already in line, dressed in full *Final Fantasy* garb and waiting for midnight to come so they can be the first people in the country to purchase a copy of *Final Fantasy XI: Online* (PS2; Square-Enix, \$99) for PS2. I can understand them, though. I've been playing the game on PC since October, and it's definitely addictive.

Confusingly, *FFXI* is not actually the 11th installment of the game—indeed, there have been many more sequels and spin-offs of the franchise for different platforms—but this is the first specifically online-oriented version of the game for the United States.

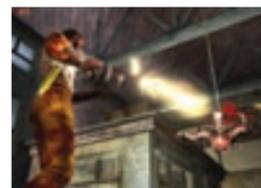
For those not familiar, *Final Fantasy* is a role-playing game set in an online world filled with hundreds of thousands of other players. Your character works towards restoring the balance of power between civilized nations and the hordes of beastmen that roam the land; along the way you combat monsters and complete quests to advance the strength of your country. The game originated in Japan, but has truly started to catch on here, especially as developers Square-Enix have released an auto-translating function, which helps players from different cultures go head-to-head against each other.

At the launch party, I had an opportunity to speak with the lead producer for *FFXI* and we have a lot to look forward to in the coming months. New features inside the game will include player-to-player competitions and a mentoring system, which allows players to ask each other questions about the gameplay while they're in the process of playing.

The eleventh installment of *Final Fantasy* might not appeal to those who like fast-paced adventures, but players willing to immerse themselves in an alternate universe for hours at a time will be rewarded. New content finds its way into the game via regular updates, and I've never found myself without something to do since I started playing the game five months ago. *Aaron Nunley*

[www.playonline.com/ff11us](http://www.playonline.com/ff11us)

# VIDEOGAME REVIEWS



## The Suffering (PS2; Midway, \$49.99)

Between the shower room, the food and the lack of conjugal visits, death row isn't exactly a walk in the park. Of course, when your

first night on the block starts off with hideous creatures killing almost everyone in the prison, it's time to fight back, using your convict wit and whatever weapons come in handy. *The Suffering* won't break any new ground with its storyline, but the mood and game play can't be beat when you're feeling the need to run around and blast the shit out of things. That being said, this isn't a game with an exceptional

number of puzzles to solve, and more often than not you'll find yourself gunning down a blood-soaked, leather-clad, freak-show monstrosity with a china doll face and knives for arms and legs. Turn off the lights and turn up the surround sound, then get ready for some really bad dreams once you've finished for the night. *Aaron Nunley*

[www.thesuffering.midway.com](http://www.thesuffering.midway.com)



## MTX Mototrax (PS2/Xbox; Activision, \$49.99)

I had no intention of reviewing this game for *XLR8R*. After all, what do readers of a cutting-edge music mag have in common with a bunch of redneck, motorcycle-riding fools? In fairness, I decided to pop *MTX Mototrax* in to the old Xbox and check it out. Five hours and one very sore thumb later I realized that this game is pure crack on two wheels! Whether you're racing stadium-style supercross or freestyle MX, the challenge of balancing your weight and hitting the rhythm of the tracks is totally addictive. When you accumulate cash from winning races, you can customize your outfit and hairstyle. I named my guy Dickhead and gave him an annoying green bi-hawk. *Andrew Smith*

[www.activision.com](http://www.activision.com)



rappers like Biz Markie and Slick Rick. “I got the Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five *Greatest Hits* records at a used record store at a strip mall and I loved it, and I still try and capture the magic of that in my music,” he says. “I pretty much fail, but it’s still a worthy attempt I suppose.”

Becoming a mainstay at local clubs and playing with national artists like Wesley Willis, MC Paul Barman and Hey, Mercedes has brought Chiaverina some fame. But even though he’s amassed a loyal following in the Milwaukee area, he admits his performances are not always well received, at least by his standards. “I played a show about a month ago and everybody was singing along. It creeped me out,” explains Chiaverina. “My favorite shows are when everything is super awkward and no one understands you, because it’s a challenge to try and win over the crowd. Or at least start fights with them.”

Chiaverina’s genius lies in his honesty, his light-heartedness, his youth and the absence of irony. “I don’t want to be seen as making fun of hip-hop; rather I’m making *funny* hip-hop,” he stresses. “I’m not trying to be anything I’m not.” *DJ Anna*  
**PHOTOGRAPH Mike Chiaverina**

www.juiceboxxx.com



## NEXT BIG THING: JUICEBOXXX

“When I’m rockin’ on the mic, yo, I ain’t no small weenie/I got an 8 1/2 like my name is Fellini,” raps Juiceboxxx, while two young girls grind seductively beside him and the crowd goes wild. Straight outta Mequon, Wisconsin, the Juice is spreading his gospel of sex raps and homemade electro beats to the Midwest massive. But that’s only after school gets out. Juiceboxxx is actually John Chiaverina, 17, a high-school junior who balances a hefty homework schedule with his burgeoning rap career.

Chiaverina started making noise with his eighth-grade pop punk band, but eventually settled on the Juiceboxxx persona at age 15, drawing on his love of classic storyteller



## ZIPPER SNAPPER

The problem with collecting limited edition toys (other than the sheer insanity of spending \$200 on the newest Michael Lau figurine) is that no one knows how dope you are. People on the street walk by you everyday, unaware that under those Dunks and that sweaty mop of hair you are a don who has 100 mint-condition Kubricks at home on his Ikea shelf. Fear not, Mr. Big-Willie Style. Dot Com Refugees, French graf writer Andre and Michael Cheung are all here to save your reputation (and your pocketbook). Just clip one of an assortment of new zipper pulls onto your Recon jumper and let the whole world know that you’re an adult who collects dolls and you’re not afraid to admit it. And wearing an adorable zipper charm makes an even better accessory for picking up chicks than a dog or a baby. Hey, you heard it here first. *Tyra Bangs*

www.kidrobot.com

Zipper pulls (from left to right): Top: Friends By Andre’s Mr. Angel, Mr. drunk pink ball, Mr. Fluffy, Mr. A, Mr. Appleworm, Mr. Skate; Middle: Dot Com Refugees’ Xavier, Thing, Simon, Dr. Dance, Brendan, Daisy; Bottom: abstract figures by Michael Cheung’s No Peace No Boom. All are \$7.95; available at Kid Robot stores in SF and NYC.



## WORDSWORTH BROOKLYN’S BEST STORYTELLER PUTS THE PUNCHLINES ASIDE.

Can an MC who made his name battlin’ and braggin’ switch his pitch and still get over? Wordsworth is about to find out.

Most folks will remember Words as half of Punchline & Wordsworth, a duo who broke out on 1998’s *Lyricist Lounge Vol. 1* and went on to record with A Tribe Called Quest, Black Star and Masta Ace. After releasing the *Punch N’ Words* EP, the pair parted ways amicably in 2001. The next year, Wordsworth dropped “On Your Feet,” his first solo single produced by Da Beatminerz, who (along with Oddisee, Curt Gowdy, J-Zone and others) provide beats for Wordsworth’s long-awaited solo debut, *Mirror Music* (Halftooth Records). And even though Words and his old partner in rhyme team up again on one track, the album shows that he’s moved past punchlines.

“When I started rhyming, me and Punch were about the metaphors and similes,” says Wordsworth, on the phone from his home in Brooklyn. “It’s cool to do that, but I’ve always foreseen that I can’t do that forever. Now people are like, ‘Yo, he’s ill with the stories. He’s ill battlin’. He’s ill talkin’ about his *life*.’”

Indeed, *Mirror Music* shows Wordsworth ditching his “me against the world” battle mentality for deeper concerns. The album is composed almost entirely of narrative pieces like “12 Months,” a year-in-the-life account of two men, and intensely personal cuts like “Guardian Angel,” about his late father’s celestial influence on his life and career. “I’m just gonna rhyme about what I feel and make it from the heart,” says Words. “I have to make these songs for the world. That’s the whole focus of the album. The album’s called *Mirror Music* because I reflect everybody. It’s a reflection of everything we go through as people.”

While Wordsworth’s storytelling skills definitely extend beyond the microphone—he wrote, rapped, acted and co-produced *The Lyricist Lounge Show* for MTV and has been working on a pilot for HBO—poetry has always been his first love. As an English language and lit major at SUNY’s Old Westbury campus, Words once gained on-campus notoriety by writing all his papers in lyrical verse.

“I did it one day because we had to do a one-page journal; so I wrote it like that and got an A. I was like, ‘What? [The teacher’s] gonna let me write in rhyme? Okay.’ So then I did every class like that. I was just tired of being accused of plagiarism. No way to say it’s not my words now!” *Ross Hogg* **PHOTOGRAPH Mireya Acierlo**

Wordsworth’s *Mirror Music* is out now. www.halftooth.com



5



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## GET YOUR KICKS

XLR8R'S RESIDENT FOOT FETISHIST BRYAN WHALEN BREAKS DOWN THE SNEAKER MOJOS YOU'LL BE ROCKING FOR SUMMER/FALL 2004.

### 1. Etnies Trixie (\$41.99)

If these shoes could talk, it'd go something like this: "So Jasmine and I went to the beach to meet Vance and that dog-face Brandon. We, like, totally made out with Vance, and then he bought us some new Juicy bottoms and a wheatgrass shot. Suweet." You get the picture.

### 2. DC Howell Alias (\$90)

These are a perfect example of a marketplace slowly veering out of control. Take two parts fanatic toy collector, one part limited edition sneaker head, some skateboard wheels and a color scheme from Pottery Barn, and throw into a washing machine. Voila! The Alias! In the box, with their little comic, they'll be perfect on the mantle next to your mint *Spawn* collection.

### 3. Adidas Y-3 Weightlifting (\$270)

Salon boyz unite! Worried that you're gonna look like all them other Brooklyn wanna-be's in their limited Decade Los and Espo t-shirts? Fear not. Gel your hair, oil yourself down, and throw on these Y-3s. While they're designated weightlifting shoes, you'd be hard pressed to find somebody wearing these lifting anything heavier than a triple extra-grande caramel soy macchiato.

### 4. Onitsuka Tiger Sunotore (\$80)

You remember the good ole' days of summer camp, don't you? Those two weeks your parents dumped you off in the middle of nowhere so they could enjoy fearlessly walking around the house naked. One look at the Tiger Sunotore and all those whimsical memories come rushing back like a hoard of pissed-off sweat bees. Ah, yes...the chigger bites, the third-degree sunburns, the poison oak rashes in unwanted places. Thanks a lot, Asics!

### 5. Puma Mostro Boot (\$200)

Why does your girlfriend take spinning class, capoeira and tae-kwan do? To kick your wimpy ass. Why did she buy these gold Mostro boots? To look damn sexy whilst kicking your wimpy ass. It's like she's a cherry '67 Impala, and these are her polished 21s. At least you can get a head start when you see them coming from two blocks away.

### 6. Wilson Thos. E. Wilson (\$79.99)

With urban existence in its current state, all hurried and such, I'm just about to throw in the towel. That's right, I'll find a "mature" woman (60+ with money), move to St. Petersburg and retire. It'll be all golf carts, Arnold Palmers and bocce

with the gents. The first step, you ask? A sensible pair of shoes, of course...

### 7. AlifeNYC RTFT Everybody Hi (\$85)

Alife has certainly chosen to wear its influences on its sleeve since stepping into the footwear market a couple years back. Not content with bastardizing a single style, this new offering combines three shoes that New Yorkers consider solely theirs: Chucks, Dunks and Phat Farm Argyle. And with an AlifeNYC woven into the heel, these kicks will dance their way into the gold-gilded halls of sneaker freak heaven they're destined for.

### 8. Reebok Sigourney Weaver Shoe (\$75)

'80s revivalism gets even more obscure as Reebok reissues the shoes that Sigourney Weaver wore in *Alien*. They're big, they have Velcro, and they come in wacky-ass colors making them hard to rock unless you're a) a clown or b) the most die-hard of NYC hipsters. Still, there's no denying that these will look great with your Alfonso Ribeiro breakdancing mat. File under the newly minted category of Moon Boot Revivalism.

### 9. I-Path Chauncey (\$74.95)

It looks as if I-Path is concerning themselves less with the technical demands of skate shoes in favor of getting more in touch with their stoner roots. Basically, these are Uggs for men. If that makes you feel emasculated, remember this: before Uggs were the must-have for MILFy suburbanites, they were *the* uniform for globe trotting late '60s/early '70s surfer dudes.

### 10. Vision Street Wear Super Trick (\$59.99)

Super Trick: not the incredibly strong transvestite prostitute on your block, but the new shoe from Vision. Another in an endless line of throwback offerings, the Super Trick is nothing more than a glorified deck shoe. It would be really great, though, if everybody started wearing these with acid-wash jeans (pegged), and pink sweaters over their Polos (collar up). Don't forget your Vuarnets.



# STRATEGY

**PORTLAND'S ELECTRONIC IMPROVISER MAKES NON-PEDESTRIAN SOUNDTRACKS FOR PEDESTRIANS.**

"Music for me started as something to alleviate boredom," says 27-year-old Paul Dickow, who moved to Portland, Oregon, from nearby Moscow, Idaho, in 1994. The son of a music professor father and a folk-singing mother, Dickow passed Idaho's long winters learning synthesizer and developing his performance skills. He originally debuted as a drummer in dissonant punk group Emergency. These days, the wiry and bespectacled laptop-and-keyboard player splits his time in between playing in two Portland arty indie bands—Nudge (Tigerbeat 6, Outward Music Company) and Fontanelle (Kranky)—and working on his solo project, Strategy.

His first album as Strategy, 2003's *Strut* (OMCO), showcased a fluid, improvisational approach to IDM, one which sounded refreshingly carefree compared to the rigid, hip-hop-informed output of Prefuse 73 or the M3rck label. The new Strategy record, *Drumsolo's Delight* (Kranky), deemphasizes percussive electronic sounds in favor of dreamy textures. Akin to Pole, Oval and Deadbeat, melodies on

the album develop gradually as dense, vaporous synths and electronic pulses build on top of one another. "I'm much more confident with texture, partly because I'm an improviser at heart," says Dickow. "I'm not much of a composer. Just ask Randy Jones (a.k.a. Caro, co-founder of Seattle's Orac Records) how hard it is to get dance tracks out of me [and you'll know what I mean]."

Dickow's artistic link to Portland and the Pacific Northwest isn't arbitrary. He's deeply entrenched in this region, which he calls by its folkloric name Cascadia. But what *is* Cascadia? "Cascadia is a place that transcends traditional state boundaries," Dickow explains. "There's a cultural mindset to it, but it's cosmopolitan in nature. I love it; it's where I live." It turns out the Pacific Northwest's Cascade Mountain region has a radical separatist tradition going back generations. "It started as a joke that we all realized wasn't that funny and actually meant a lot to us," Dickow explains. "After 9-11, the [Cascadian] idea became a way to express our opposition to US policies."

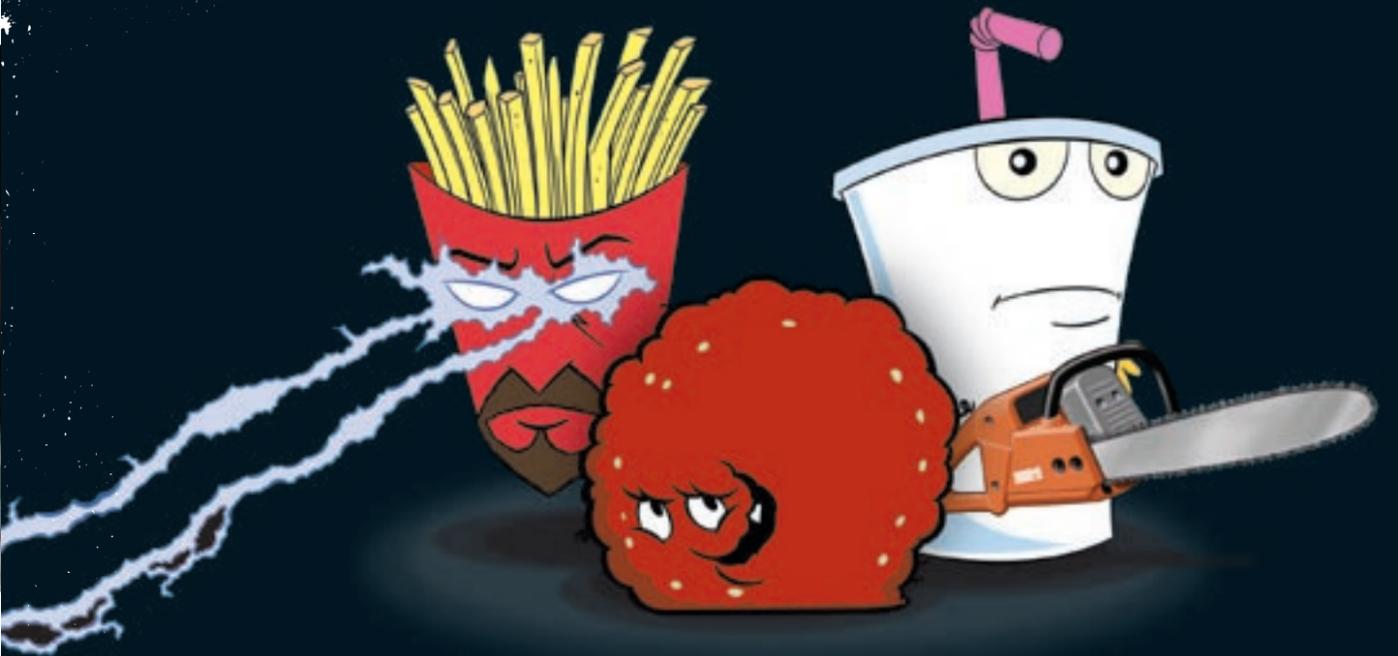
Cascadian links extend to each last Thursday of the month at Portland's Dunes club, where Dickow and his mentor, David Chandler of Solenoid (who taught Dickow how to mix records), do a themed DJ

night called Community Library. "David and I act as hosts, and we create themed DJ sets where we pick a topic like 'eyes,' [and] all the songs have to be about eyes or tears. Last time I played I did 'color.' It allows you to cut across genres."

Although Dickow admits to listening to a lot of Moodymann and obsessing over DJing, the music on *Drumsolo's Delight* is more suited to leisurely pedestrian transit than darkened dancefloors. "I don't have a driver's license, I walk everywhere," he confesses. "I'm totally a headphone kid. I wanted to write an album for people who walk." *Derek Grey*

PHOTOGRAPH Annie Feldmeier

*Drumsolo's Delight* is out now on Kranky Records. [www.kranky.net](http://www.kranky.net)



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# TRADESPOTTING

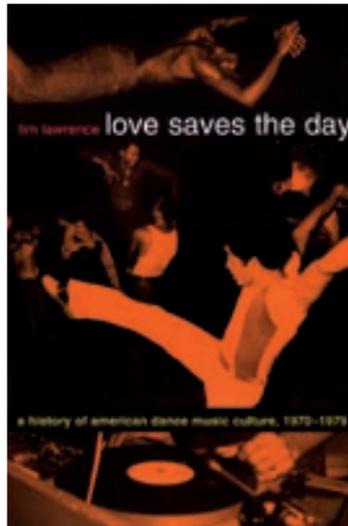
Twice a year the clothing industry gathers in Las Vegas for the **MAGIC** tradeshow and its indie stepchild, **POOL**. Although all of what's at this immense gathering isn't great (unless you're dying to see the unveiling of Eminem's Shady Limited line), the *XLR8R* crew took a quick reconnoiter of both shows and found a few gems for spring and fall.

www.magiconline.com, www.pooltradeshow.com

1. PF Flyers' ladies' styles; 2. intense t graphics from Imaginary Foundation; 3. American Apparel's sexy women's underthings; 4. Analog launches post-apocalyptic parkas; 5. old school/new school with Brad from Exact Science; 6. Sparks-lover and man about town, *Flyer* mag's Josh DJs at the *Vice* party; 7. Ten Deep's t-shirts were hot, on top of their runnin' cut and sew; 8. Miss Sixty and affiliate lines; 9. Kenzo Minami for Breakbeat Science; 10. Fila mixed couture with classics in new colorways.

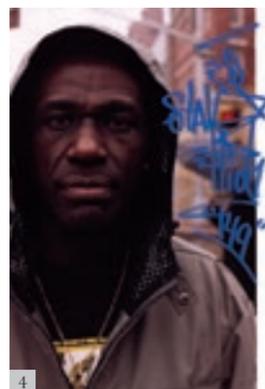
11. Commonwealth Stacks' clean and mean style; 12. full line inspired by legendary reggae film, *Rockers*; 13. at XLarge, we chose "love;" 14. The Stills churn out the standards at the *Vice* event; 15. rude Stüssy button-downs; 16. Ubiquity isn't just records, with a full line of t-shirts and even canvasses; 17. The Modern Amusement theme park; 18. Outdoor Terrier proves trucker hats and pirate themes are by no means dead; 19. Soul Rebel introduced striking outerwear; 20. bags and caps from Syndrome.





# LOVE HANGOVER

What's love got to do with it? The tedium of *Love Saves The Day: A History of American Dance Music Culture, 1970-1979* (softcover; Duke, \$23.95) sometimes forces the question. While author Tim Lawrence should be commended for doing his homework (over 300 interviews) and knowing his subject matter (the advent of disco through early house music), his book, quite frankly, needs another edit. *Love Saves...* is excessive—not in the deliciously decadent way Studio 54 hoisted a coke-sniffing moon every night, but because too many of its facts are either unimportant or stale. Learning about how David Mancuso and his Loft contributed to the nascent house culture is fascinating, but his entire life story (including photos of him as an orphan) is useless here; and the notorious late night call from Casablanca's Neil Bogart to producer Giorgio Moroder (begging him to extend Donna Summers' "Love To Love You, Baby") has been printed so many times (even by this hack writer) it only serves as filler. Sure, Lawrence has got the Mott's on NYC's first record pools and how promiscuous gays set the scene, but through 498 pages he dilutes disco's passion with tiresome detail. *Daniel Sivek*



# BOMB SQUAD

One cannot underestimate how mythical a destination New York City is for global graffiti writers. Just as the world's young rappers dream of making the pilgrimage to hip-hop's birthplace in the Bronx, fledgling suburban writers dream of hitting hot spots in the Lower East Side as they watch *Style Wars* over and over again, memorizing the can strokes of legends like Min One and Seen. Two new books offer more information and inspiration for the NYC-obsessed. *Broken Windows* (softcover; Gingko Press, \$39.95) is a 180-pager full of concept-driven, large-scale pieces, primarily from the 1980s and done by writers from NYC and abroad. Disappointingly, it focuses primarily on legal walls, pleasing those who like to compare aerosol work to fine art, but largely ignoring the criminal undercurrent that makes graf so compelling in the first place. *Broken Windows* offers corneal titillation and lettering ideas, but *Autograf* (hardcover; powerhouse books, \$29.95) is a way cooler book to have in your house. Photographer Peter Sutherland captures the essence of NYC graffiti, interspersing shots of heavily dogged walls in Brooklyn and tagged-up white trucks with gripping "autographed" portraits of the city's most important writers in their natural habitat. From old-schoolers like Stay

High 149 and Futura to new-school legends including Sacer, Mint and Claw (and including a handwritten manifesto by Revs), *Autograf* proves that graf's mythological status as the great gritty American outlaw culture is well deserved. *Vivian Host*

[www.gingkopress.com](http://www.gingkopress.com), [www.powerhousebooks.com](http://www.powerhousebooks.com)

1. MINT; 2. MERZ; 3. SARE;  
4. Stay High 149 (all from  
*Autograf*); 5. *Autograf* (photos by  
by Peter Sutherland, text by  
Revs); 6. *Broken Windows*



# COLLEEN

CECILIE SCHOTT EXPRESSES WIDE-SCREEN EMOTIONS IN MINIATURE.

You are dreaming deeply. Intricately patterned lace curtains catch soft sunlight floating through an open window. Slowly, clouds swirl to screen the sun. The afternoon glow fades as chilly winds swell. Frost starts inching over the pane, creeping like a lonely spirit. It catches the edge of the curtain, tracing lines with ice. Crystals climb beams and ripple across wallpaper. The stairs shiver. Within moments the entire house is frozen solid. Suddenly, the sun shakes off its saboteur's sleeping gas and breaks through, one ray at a time. With the warmth comes a haunting melody. Freed energy sings as binds melt away. You twinkle awake.

Cecile Schott makes music for moments after dreams. Her compositions glisten with mystery. The threads are familiar, but the tapestry surreal; as you move close, the fabric disappears. Schott grew up quietly in Southern France. Loneliness pulled her into books. "I was into Milan Kundera, Kafka, and generally speaking anything that was dark and strange," she recounts. Altered realities existed within these pages of whispered words and she searched for more on her own.

Schott's path eventually crossed with music. She explains her initial epiphany. "One song [convinced me] that I [had] to make music—'A Day in the Life' by the Beatles. It was like being swept up by something incredible."

*Everyone Alive Wants Answers* (Leaf), her debut album under the moniker Colleen, reflects this epic tone. Grand emotions are expressed in miniature like a music box singing spells. She strips compositions down to their core and lets the spirit shine through.

Much of *Everyone Alive Wants Answers* was spliced together from borrowed records. Cecile shares the story: "I moved to Paris and started going to the music libraries and [started] borrowing tons of stuff from absolutely every single genre (with a few exceptions)." Schott's wide-screen scope would explain why Colleen at times sounds like Erik Satie conducting My Bloody Valentine covers for Javanese gamelan. Despite a vast number of sources, the resulting compositions still vibrate with intimacy.

Colleen performances follow the zig-zagging path of Schott's musical tastes. Solo, she plays and loops classical guitar, cello, melodica, a German zither, music boxes, harmonica, flute, glockenspiel and electric organ. These live experiments, sans sampler, transform the way she records music, her process becoming more organic all the time. Colleen is making personal music to share with you. Listen as she melts the ice. *frosty PHOTOGRAPH Sophie Mandolin*

[www.colleenplays.org](http://www.colleenplays.org), [www.theleaflabel.com](http://www.theleaflabel.com)



▲ Marcus Lalaro (left) and Zac Johnson

## UNDER THE NEEDLE

SEATTLE'S PREMIER HIP-HOP LABEL REPS THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST'S NEW GRUNGE.

When Pacific Northwest hip-hop promoters Marcus Lalaro, 27, and Zac Johnson, 26, met up in 2000, they shared a single vision: to put Seattle hip-hop on the map. Though their city was known for Starbucks and alternative rock, its rich hip-hop talent had been all but ignored, save for Sir Mix-A-Lot and his posse on Broadway.

Lalaro and Johnson started a label, Under the Needle, with the mission of repping the Seattle scene. Their current roster reads like a roll call of Pacific Northwest talent. Boom Bap Project is a staple of virtually every big rap show, bringing its classic indie sound to the masses. BBP gets their boom bap from the soon-to-be legendary producers Vitamin D and Jake One—who are fresh off work for artists like De La Soul, Gift of Gab and G-Unit.

At the other end of this spectrum lies a crew that's deeper than Atlantis; Old Dominion is a collective of MCs striving to push the lyrical envelope, whether working on solo LPs or recording in tandem. From the hard-rock sounds of tough guy JFK to the black metal rap of Onry

Ozzborn, Old Dominion paints a stark picture of Seattle, creatively plumbing the gloomier depths of its rainy hometown.

"Dark is our signature sound, but Seattle has a variety of sounds," says Ozzborn. "So you have a tendency to take everything in and come up with something unique yourself—everyone has their own interpretation. Seattle's just like that. And [Under the Needle] is willing to let you push the limit on things, to experiment."

The most experimental—and probably soon-to-be most successful—of recent Under the Needle projects is Morlocks. The crew consists of Old Dominion MC Barfly, UK drum & bass producer Tech Itch, DMC Champion scratch DJ Swamp and Napalm Death guitarist Justin Broderick. Together, they create a twisted and distorted electronic wall of sound somewhere between the dungeon, the rave and the dumpster. Meanwhile, UTS is also pushing the Mexicans, a punk rock group with a forthcoming album that Lalaro describes as "drunken Fugazi."

When they're not putting out records or managing their stable of artists, Lalaro and Johnson are busy with a hip-hop barbershop called Sal's (1520 E. Olive Way), a screen-printing business and an array of weekly parties, including a long-running drum & bass night at the Baltic Room and Yo, Son, which was recently touted in Rolling Stone as "one of the country's best parties."

"Basically we're just pushing Seattle hip-hop to where it becomes international and putting out groundbreaking music," explains Johnson. Or maybe the chorus of Boom Bap Project's new single says it better: "Welcome to Seattle where the sun don't shine/and we redefine the headline between beats and rhymes." *Anna Klafner*

PHOTOGRAPH Minuette Le

www.stuckundertheneedle.com

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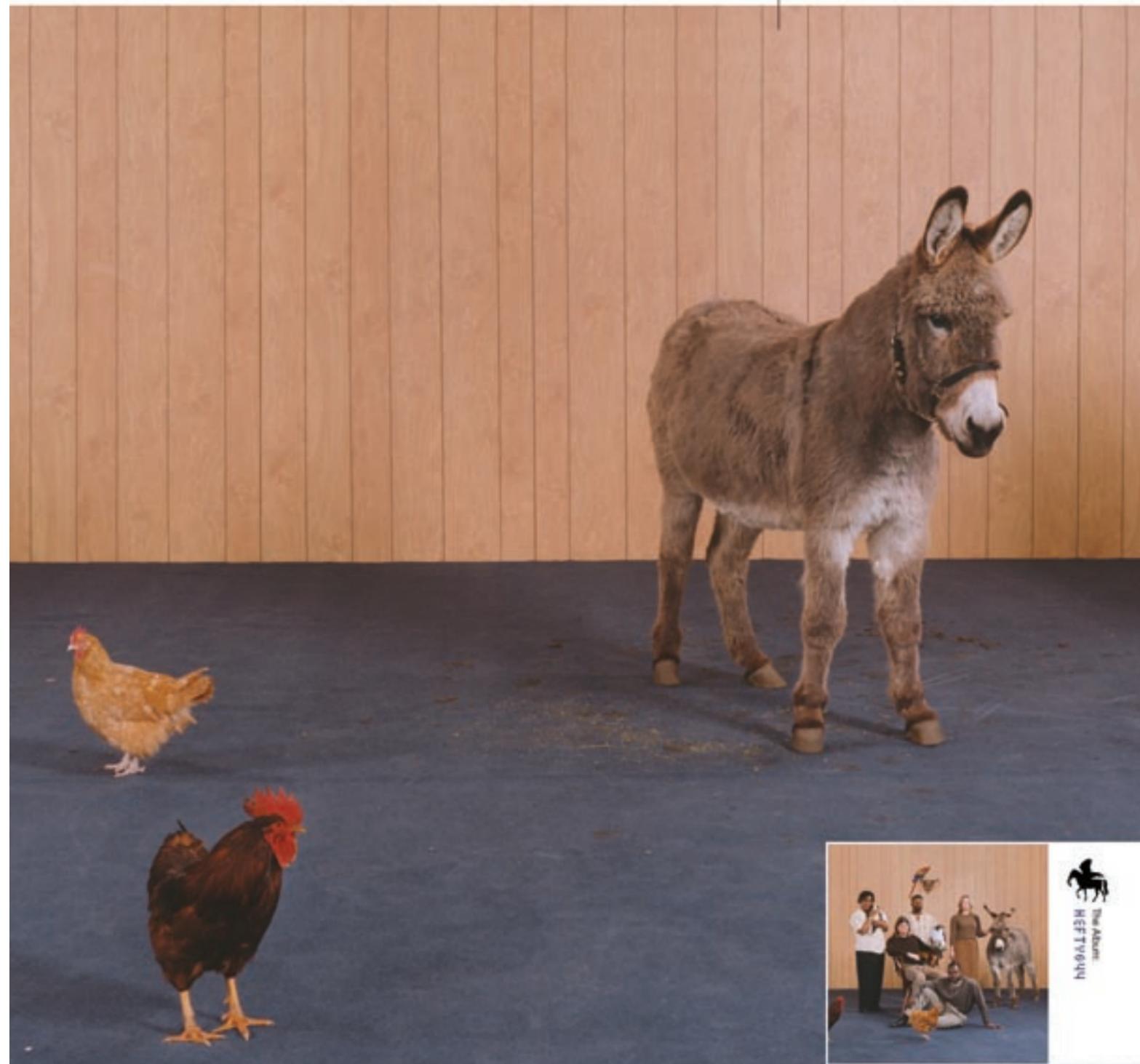
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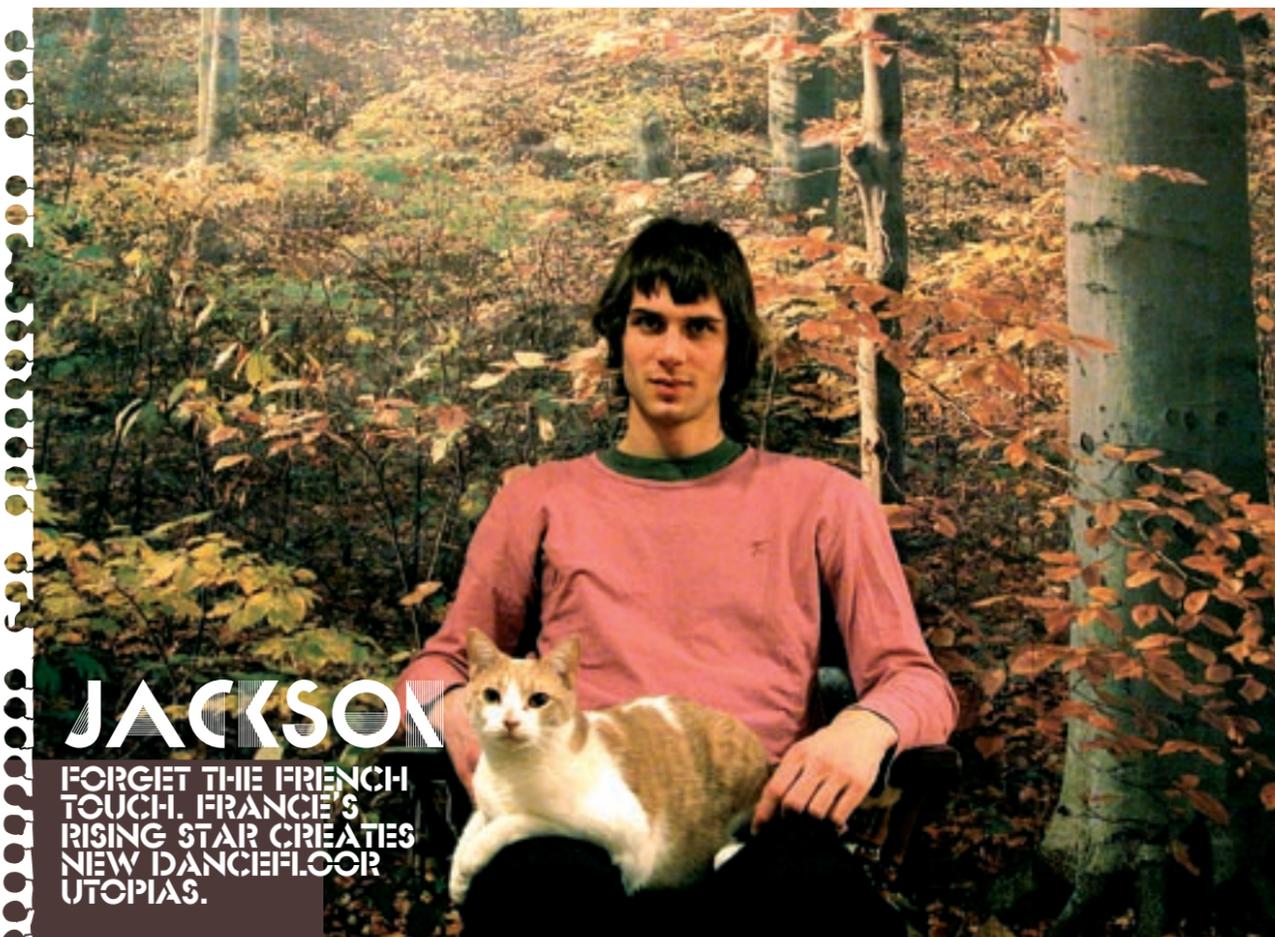


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**JACKSON**  
 FORGET THE FRENCH TOUCH. FRANCE'S RISING STAR CREATES NEW DANCEFLOOR UTOPIAS.

The French really do it right. First, they brought us the revolutionary savory/sweet throwdown called the almond croissant, then that Goddard guy made some brilliant movies, and then there were those unforgettable few years that Daft Punk and the Source Records mafia ruled global nightclubs in a wave of vocodered four/four robo-fever. But what's been going on recently?

Jackson's (got it) going on. The 25-year-old Parisian seemingly came out of nowhere in 2003 with a densely brilliant fugue (the "Utopia" EP) buttressed by a stunning remix of "Run Into Flowers" by Parisian popsters M83. This auspicious emergence brought him to the attention of music fans worldwide (including Berlin's Ellen Allien and London's Richard X), but, according to Jackson, he has been laboriously constructing his sound for years.

"I had been making music for a long time, but I was not satisfied with it," says Jackson, born Jackson Fourgeaud to musically inclined parents. "Early on, I was exposed to Prince and Marvin Gaye, then I got into Hendrix and Marley and then came the teenage rebellion: gabba and techno, and then, with girlfriends, house. Now I'm trying to make everything fit together."

Nowhere has this noble quest of musical Tetris succeeded more than on "Utopia," where Fourgeaud's laptop swallows an orchestra and then emits clipped, gastro-orchestral bursts of Druidian electro crunk. Halfway through, the listener encounters an achingly

angelic chorus rendered by none other than Fourgeaud's mom. "She was a pop singer in the '80s and I thought it was the most punk thing I could do to have my mom singing on my record," he explains. Originally recorded for a friend's compilation, "Utopia"'s revolutionary goodness shocked friends Mr. Oizo and Pepe Braddock, who convinced the leftfield dancefloor wunderkind to release the single, along with a forthcoming album.

"Things move very slowly in France," observes Fourgeaud, who recently spent a week in Manhattan club-testing his new tracks. "It's not immediate like everything is in New York. Here people really want to be around others who are doing the same thing. In Paris, you work on your own and figure it out."

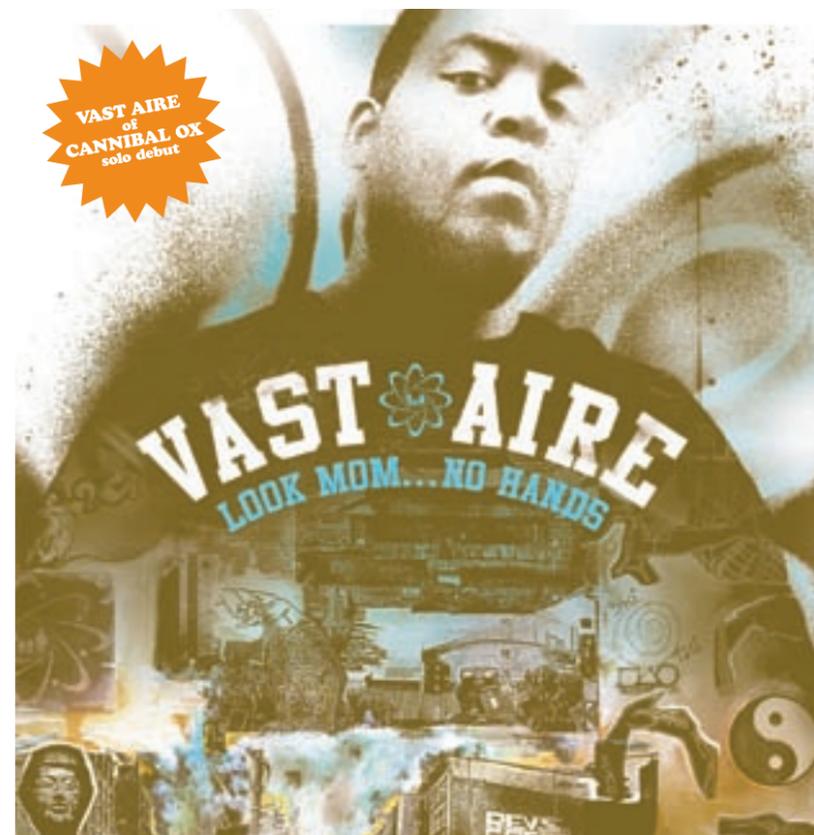
At least the pressure to be the next iconic, Gap jeans-flogging disco house phenom has subsided. "I feel better releasing records now that the whole 'French Touch' thing is over," he says. "The idea that just because you release a record in France, suddenly you belong to this whole scene is crazy. I never felt comfortable being trapped in an organization. I like individuals, and this represents a new way, a new direction for me." *Brion Paul*  
 PHOTOGRAPH Andrew Potter

The "Utopia" EP is out now on Sound of Barclay. Jackson's album is due out September 2004.



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# THE SECOND SAMPLE

RJD2's back—and he's singing! With homespun ideas, a sampler and sense of humor in hand, the Ohio beatmaker launches his sophomore album.

words: Scott Thill Photographs: David Naugle



RJD2 does not want to sit idly on his ass while the sonic signatures he helped evolve descend into obsolescence around him. He's got his eyes squarely focused elsewhere. Sure, he's still beat digging, but he's scouring the same basements that scored him those elusive Parliament and Bob James records for broken or ignored musical instruments. Yeah, he still likes MCs—and rap, for that matter—but he's more interested in hearing the sound of his own voice (or his girlfriend's) on *Since We Last Spoke*, his brilliant sophomore effort on Def Jux.

See, he's already done the supernova thang. The Ohio-bred DJ released his sterling 2002 debut, *Deadringer*, in a tough year, one that featured the lauded efforts of high-powered stalwarts like DJ Shadow and his boss, Def Jux label head El-P. He still came out smelling like a critically acclaimed rose, and not just because the skills were there. That much we already knew. What we didn't know is that the self-deprecating DJ, like the *Star Wars* droid he might or might not be named after, has vision. He's looking down the road, understanding that you can't keep cycling the same record on and off the deck, and you can't base a career on the plaudits of one job well done.

So RJD2 did the next best thing and went introspective, asking himself some hard questions along the way. Who is this new record for? Is it what I want? Does it have music that I truly enjoy on it? Am I happy?

*Since We Last Spoke* answers all those questions and more, while staking out a few bold new directions for sample-based music. The title alone is a sign that much has changed since the days of *Deadringer*.

"That's the intention," says the self-deprecating DJ. "I had a number of titles and I was changing them every day. But at the last minute, the day the promos were going into production for mailing, I changed it to what it is now because I felt like it was the only thing that wasn't a joke. This was the only one that I could use with a straight face."

This isn't to say that RJ doesn't own a healthy sense of humor, but a heavy dose of acclaim can breed the much heavier weight of expectation. While most artists use that critical anticipation to simply stay the course on their sophomore efforts, RJ (born Ramble Jon Krohn) was more interested in getting personal, and choosing the path not taken.

"For better or worse," he says, "this is the only record I've made that's one hundred percent me. I think it's the most accomplished thing I've done. The idea was to go in a completely different direction, throw some new styles and sounds into the mix. There are no MCs on *Since We Last Spoke*; in fact, most of the live vocals come from me and my girlfriend," he explains. "And Def Jux has been great about it, because they just let me do what I want to do. We talk all the time about the most boring industry shit there is, but the last thing they want to do is to tell me what to do with my

music. They've given me complete control. In fact, for *Since We Last Spoke*, I just dropped off the tapes and said, 'Here's the new album!' I don't think we've ever even had a conversation about the music.

"Plus, it would have been a cop-out to try to make *Deadringer* again," RJD2 adds. "That would have been boring. But at the same time, I felt that it would have also been a cop-out for me to do something different strictly for the sake of being different. I initially set out to do just that but decided [halfway through recording the new album] that it was more important to just sit down and make music that I'm proud of, rather than something that's different and not good at all."

*Since We Last Spoke* deviates from the atmospheric textures that made *Deadringer* sound akin to DJ Shadow's *Entroducing* or *Preemptive Strike*. Instead, the album is an extended consideration of '70s soul music, most notably the evocative, plaintive work of RJ's favorite, Donny Hathaway. Although *Deadringer* was a critical success and a masterpiece to boot, this time around RJD2's exploded that formula and taken some risks. He's employed everything from salsa, to samba, to deep soul, 21st-century space funk and whatever else he found in the stacks at record stores you won't visit anymore, to raise the bar for turntablists to come.

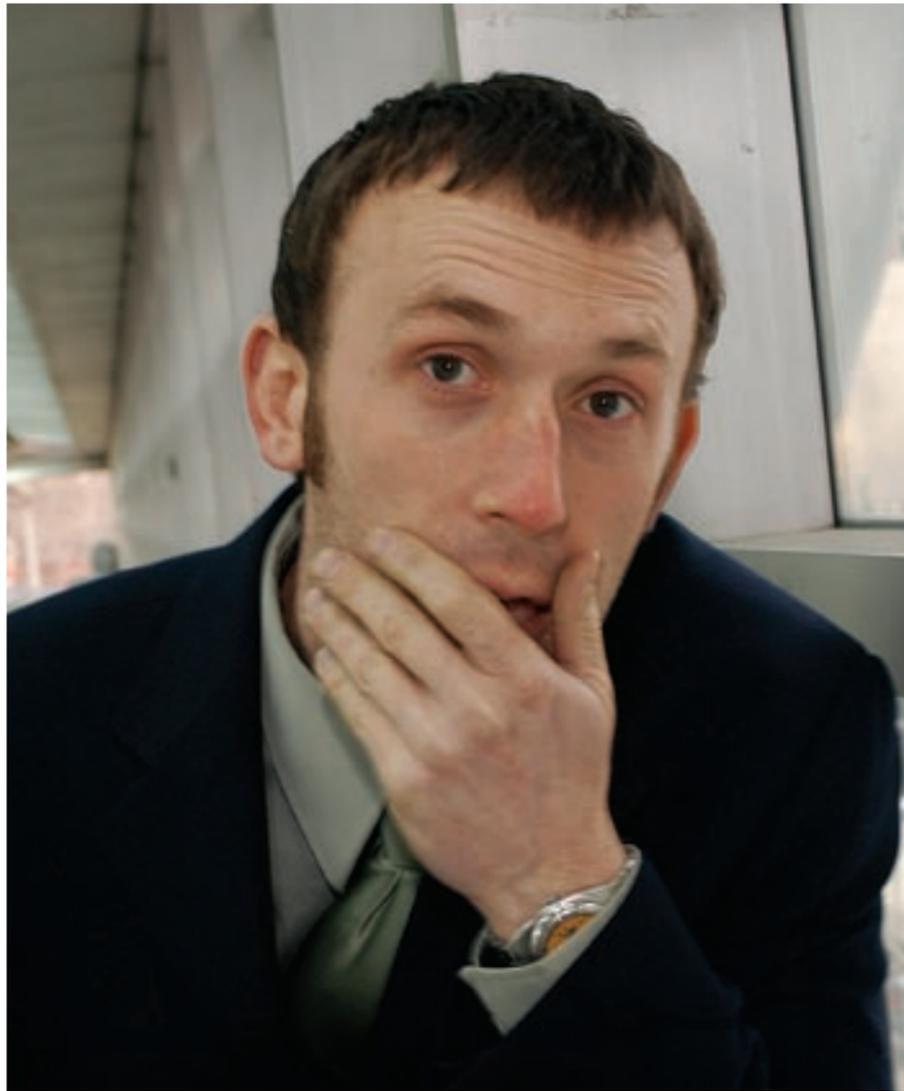
The title track, a prog guitar stomp that starts and stops in funk-ed-up fits, is the meat of the matter, shifting gears and movements in mid-stride. But the album's mellow middle is the real dope shit; the soft-as-silk "Making Days Longer," "Someone's Second Kiss" and "To All of You" feel like the stirring soundtrack for Barry White's bedroom. With apologies to RJ, they feel less like discrete songs than half an hour of multi-hued installments of a soul orchestra. It's a much more poignant effort this time out, rivaling *Deadringer*'s most moving tracks like "Smoke and Mirrors" in its somber but expressive clarity.

Executing his philosophy required exerting greater control over the samples and sounds that went into *Since We Last Spoke*. One of RJD2's methods for achieving a greater level of sonic freedom was to often cut the sample cord in favor of good old-fashioned live instrumentation.

"Sometimes I would put things together out of samples," he explains, "and maybe I'd hear a drum fill come in at a point that I didn't want it to. So I would just recreate it live, rather than use the sample. Through that experimentation, I stumbled across things I wasn't setting out to do but nevertheless still sounded good to me."

And, unlike several DJs in the music game, RJD2 has a musical ear for live instrumentation, having spent much of his high school career studying it. "I went to a vocational music school when I was in high school," he adds. "I had to study the keyboard, composition, theory, all that stuff. I wouldn't say I'm a wizard, but I have a pretty good working

**"I'm not a fan of electronic music."**



knowledge. Of course, when I'm sitting down to start a song, I don't give a shit about any kind of theory or anything—I'm looking for a feeling or a mood. But just through my understanding of things, I know what can and can't be done, so for me that training is crucial. I don't know how I could make a record without it."

Though *Since We Last Spoke* employs more live instrumentation than *Deadringer*, don't expect to see RJD2 fronting a live band anytime soon, even though he boasts a modest proficiency at several instruments. Technology is still the thing that gets his creative juices flowing, at least in the beginning.

"I still ultimately prefer to start a track sitting at the sampler," he says. "In terms of composition and arrangement, just sitting in front of that box and pushing buttons is the easiest way I know of to come up with an arrangement."

That method runs slightly counter to convention—musicians usually sit down with their instruments and move their way to technology at a later stage. But for RJ, a piano or keyboard's limitless nature can sometimes get in the way of the organizing principles of sample-based work, where compositions are oriented towards the sonic big picture rather than chord progressions from a single guitar or piano.

"When I sit down at the piano and start a track, the possibilities are endless," he explains. "So I'm starting from the premise that there is literally too much to do. But when I sit in front of the sampler, I have the opposite perspective. It forces me to come from a much more minimalist angle, to think about the relationships between all of the instruments that I've got going. It helps me focus on what's effective and what's not."

Whenever he does tackle live instruments, his weapon of choice is usually a keyboard favored by acclaimed knob-tweakers and gear-heads everywhere. "I'd probably say my Rhodes

synthesizer is my go-to instrument, just because when you run it through an amp, you can process the sound in so many ways. The EQ, sustain, tremolo, reverb and all those things can so radically change the way you make music," he says.

Diversity—of sound, of technique, of technology—seems to be RJD2's best weapon. And he's not simply satisfied with making magic happen on the recording end. As his 2003 production work with Diverse on *One A.M.* and Blueprint on Soul Position's self-titled effort shows, RJ is ready to flesh out his inexperience on the other side of the studio as well.

"More and more, I idolize engineers, because there's just so much to learn. What you know and the decisions you make are huge. Engineers have everything to do with how a record sounds. It's the field that I know the least about and have the least experience in, so I think that's another reason why I'm so attracted to it."

What isn't fun for RJD2, however, is electronic music in general. Although he's a born-and-bred hip-hop head, he's more interested in avoiding comparisons to many of the artists that critics and fans have associated him with.

"I can honestly tell you that I don't follow electronic music that heavily," he states.

**"I felt that it would have also been a cop-out for me to do something different strictly for the sake of being different."**



RJD2's  
Good Life

TOP  
11

- 01 My family being healthy.
- 02 Acting like a goddamn grownup for once.
- 03 Donny Hathaway's way-too-small catalog.
- 04 The burgers at the White Dog Café.
- 05 Mars Volta's Deloused in the Comatorium.
- 06 My new gas-guzzling, war-on-terror-supporting SUV.
- 07 Selling merch hand-to-hand, thus eliminating venue percentage.
- 08 The OC—the ultimate guilty pleasure.
- 09 People around me making money and being successful.
- 10 Middle-aged women with sideways caps that say "Yo." Am I the only one that sees 'em?
- 11 Being lucky enough to sell records.

What does get RJD2's brain spinning is organic soul music, such as that of tortured genius Donny Hathaway, who was found dead of an apparent suicide in 1979. The DJ's love of Hathaway is so deep that the extended middle of *Since We Last Spoke* is rife with Hathaway's ghostly presence. Songs like "The Second Kiss," "Iced Lightning," "To All of You" and even "One Day" all have that lilting '70s sound that will probably blow thirty-something listeners back to their childhoods.

"Donny Hathaway and the Impressions are my staples," he says. "Along with Stevie Wonder and the Beatles, those records are my favorite of all time. They're albums that I always come back to. I think if I've internalized anything, it's that music. And honestly, I got into it one level below hip-hop, because I started out as a DJ. So I was naturally looking for things I could work into a set. I was buying the usual Bob James, Parliament and James Brown-type shit. And then I just got into soul music. At one point, it went beyond just looking for funky records that I could play as a DJ. I started getting deep into stuff that you'd never play when you were out but was still just amazing listening music."

Those last three words more than sum up the gifts offered by *Since We Last Spoke*. But sophomore success is the farthest thing from RJD2's mind. He's exposed and satisfied himself the second time around. And that's all that matters.

"There's a good chance that this record could completely flop," he says. "But I'm proud of it."

*Since We Last Spoke* is out now on Definitive Jux Recordings. [www.definitivejux.net](http://www.definitivejux.net)

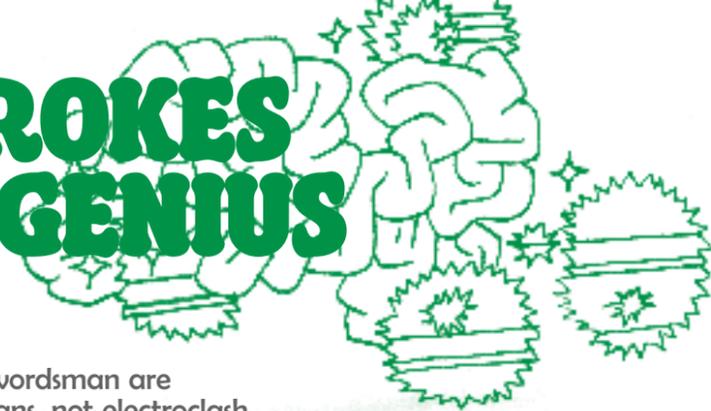
"I'm aware of things, but my focus runs from hugely commercial radio rap and r&b down to the abstract stuff like Madlib, Shadow and MF Doom. I can appreciate the perspective of a few of those artists, and get behind it because I know that ultimately they got started doing this just from making a beat. Rap music is what inspired them. Whereas people like Amon Tobin, it's cool and accomplished, but I can't sit here and tell you that I'm a fan of drum & bass. I'm not a fan of electronic music, although I think some of it's cool."



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# STROKES OF GENIUS



Two Lone Swordsman are electro humans, not electroclash.

Words: Philip Sherburne Photographs: Tom Oldham

**XLR8R:** What occasioned the remix collection?

Andrew Weatherall: Every now and again I have a systematic trawl through the back catalogue department of my record library, and I was beginning to pull out lots of remixes that me and Keith had done over the years. Every time I came to a Two Lone Swordsman remix I'd put it to one side, so I had a little section of, like, 15 of our remixes. I made a compilation CD just to listen to, and I thought, 'Well, this actually sounds quite good.' Pete, who runs the record label for me, was always going on about a compilation of our remixes, so he heard it and said, 'Why don't we put it out?' It's just luck that I happened to pull out lots of the old remixes over a matter of weeks.

**XLR8R:** How did you choose what went in? I was surprised that it wasn't a double disc.

AW: There will be further volumes to follow, I'd imagine, because there's lots. I'd forgotten how much we'd done, there's like 50 or 60 remixes. Basically, these were all the tracks I'd put on the original CD for my own personal listening, so I thought, 'Okay, that's a good collection of mixes, it sounds like a body of work.' We'll put that out, then in a few months I'll make another compilation CD of some more that I hadn't put on there—otherwise you could spend more time compiling it [and] you just get too picky. If it sounds good, I like to catch that moment. [*Peppered With Spastic Magic*] is a moment when I put [the remixes] on CD and listened to them pretty much in that order, just going to gigs and round people's houses and stuff like that. So it's quite a spontaneous collection. I always like that sort of thing. If you get a spark immediately, then just leave it, even if it's got mistakes.

**XLR8R:** Do you have a particular philosophy of the remix? Between fidelity to the original and Aphex Twin and Mu-Ziq's infamous disregard, where do you fall?

AW: I don't have a disregard. With a lot of those mixes what we do is we take little melody lines or little bass runs that only appear a few times—maybe little bass changes that only happen for a few bars—and we build a track up around that. That's what the Starsailor one is, plus we take a little one-bar section of their acoustic guitar and stretch it beyond belief in the sampler. We just take those little elements, those little mistakes. You know, if we get a DAT and it says on one of the tracks, 'Do not use,' we go straight to that. It's just finding that little seed within the original track and expanding on it. It's just over-magnifying a very small part, a part that goes by without you even noticing, and expanding on that idea.

**XLR8R:** Do you ever sit down to remix a track and say, "I just don't know what the fuck I'm going to do with this?"

AW: No, because then I wouldn't take it in the first place. If I listen to a track, even if there's just

**"I'd rather have crisp electro made by smart young men in nicely creased trousers than by a bunch of 40-year-olds with bald heads and Tresor t-shirts."**

Joey Burns of the band Calexico was driving down the New Jersey Turnpike last fall, listening to NPR's *All Things Considered*, when a scrap of familiar music caught his ear. A Calexico song that the British duo Two Lone Swordsman had remixed several years before was now being used as background music for a news segment on pimps.

It's tempting to look for some kind of irony here—insert requisite quip about electronic music's habit of prostituting itself via commissioned mixes. But Two Lone Swordsman, the duo of Andrew Weatherall and Keith Tenniswood, have never taken the easy route of simply adding a kick drum and invoicing it; on their versions for artists like St. Etienne, Spiritualized and Texas, they reimagine each song from inside out. Their remix aptitude was first evident with Weatherall's groundbreaking fusion of rock and dance production for Primal Scream's 1991 album *Screamadelica*, and reaches a peak on their new album, *Peppered With Spastic Magic*. This record, which collects 15 of their remixes, demonstrates the Swordsman's particular facility for rock music, borrowing from its flux and heft to create something at once supple and brittle, human and machine.

The Calexico/Swordsmen collaboration shows another way that Weatherall and Tenniswood aren't your typical hired guns. In an unusual bit of turnabout, the two actually came looking for a Calexico remake of one of their own tracks. When asked what their fee would be, Calexico suggested a barter of mix for mix—a far cry from two-bit pimpin'.





## “I’ve learned how a label shouldn’t be run by fucking up one.”

four bars of bassline that grab me, then I’ll do it. I wouldn’t do a track that I thought it was just pointless doing anything with.

**XLR8R: Do you turn down remix work, or if the price is right will you take anything?**

AW: No, but that does diminish with the amount of zeros on the end of the proposal. I’d do some turd polishing if it bought me a house. [Laughs]

**XLR8R: Have you had any experience with artists loathing what you’d done with the remix?**

AW: Not loathing, but they did have a point. I did a mix for Yello, and it was not my best work. I saw them interviewed on MTV and Dieter Mayer was like [mimics German accent], ‘Yeah, the Andrew Weatherall remix, I think he’s just wanting to make his own music. It has nothing to do with Yello,’ you know what I mean? Every other time it’s been cool; I mean, to my face. They may be going back to the studio and saying, ‘What the fuck? How much did that cost us?’ [Laughs]

**XLR8R: But you are essentially making your own music, as opposed to remixers who are just retouching it.**

AW: I look at it as doing a cover version rather than a remix a lot of the time, to be honest with you. But people know that’s what we do. I can weed out the people who come to us blind just because we’ve been in the paper that week, or the wheels come round and we’re in favor again. You know, the people that know what you do. A perverse part of me wants to do stuff for people that will have no idea, but I’d rather spend the time working with reasonably like-minded people.

**XLR8R: You seem to be one of the earlier artists to have been tapped to remix rock acts. Was this occasioned by your work with Primal Scream?**

AW: It’s just all part of the music and stuff that’s been played at the sort of early acid house clubs. That included rock tracks, so you got people in rock bands—Happy Mondays, Primal Scream—going to acid house clubs. That’s where the sort of rock/dance thing came from. Here we are 15, 20 years later and it’s coming round again. For a while people wanted faceless dance music, no heroes. At the moment people want something with a bit more energy and a bit more focus. Even in techno, you know—even Richie Hawtin’s getting fashionable haircuts and colored contact lenses. Everyone’s playing the game to a certain extent, but I think that makes it more fun to be honest.

**XLR8R: What’s different on the new Swordsmen album you’re finishing now?**

AW: The objects used to make it have been more three-dimensional than file-based. It’s got live elements. We wrote tracks electronically and then did cover versions of them and kind of squashed the two together. We’re bringing in a few drummers, but other than that it’s us—Keith playing guitar and bass, me doing keyboards and vocals.

**XLR8R: Are these going to be electro-oriented tracks?**

AW: Some are, some aren’t. Some are fast, some are slow. It’s not a case of, ‘Now here’s our album in this style.’ Everyone that’s heard it has said, ‘Well, that’s you, but playing with more live instruments.’ It’s our same arrangements, our same kind of chord sequences, you know what I mean? It is the heart of us. Someone else described it as sounding like my entire record collection of the past 20 years crammed into 10 tracks.

**XLR8R: What made you take this route this time around?**

AW: We had a spare room at the studio and my friend wanted to store his drum kit down there, so it was like, ‘Okay, let’s set up some mics and record some live drums.’ It wasn’t any conscious decision like, ‘We’re not doing an electro album this time! This will fox them!’ It wasn’t some cunning move. It was just, ‘There’s a drum kit, and there’s a room, and there’s a microphone. Let’s go.’

**XLR8R: I’m intrigued that over the past few years you seem to have put more effort into your Rotters Golf Club label rather than putting out tons of Swordsmen records for Warp.**

AW: Most of the stuff on Rotters is me and Keith under pseudonyms. We went through a sporadic phase of making loads of tracks, like doing a track a day, and we needed an outlet. Warp were good about that, they let us do it. So we had all that material, plus my friends are making good music. And I’ve learned how a label shouldn’t be run by fucking up one. So I thought, well, I’ll try a label and learn from the mistakes. There’s no grand plan.

**XLR8R: How do you regard the current state of electro and where you fit into that?**

AW: I’m not really interested. I still get loads of good electro records; I get three or four a week that are really outstanding, but then I get just as many house records. I’m not bothered in scenes. When I play a set, I’ll play house, techno, electro—just good dirty, funky machine music. I don’t care who’s making it, what scene it is, what trousers you have to wear and shit like that.

**XLR8R: Trousers are important!**

AW: They can be, yeah. I’d rather have crisp electro made by smart young men in nicely creased trousers than by a bunch of 40-year-olds with bald heads and Tresor t-shirts. [Laughs] We’re not part of any scene, we just do our thing. With one record people want to put us in with electroclash, another they might put us somewhere else. It’s just all our influences coming out—trying to make tunes that are heavy, quite fast, and fit into techno sets, but don’t just rely on four drum loops. Techno got a bit stale; it was just those sort of loop tracks. We thought, ‘Well, let’s just make some tracks that are heavy enough and powerful enough, but try something interesting rhythmically.’

**XLR8R: What draws you to “machine music,” per se?**

AW: The world of the laptop and the computer is very sterile. A lot of electronic music has no actuality—no existence, really. It’s a digital space, whereas actual human space in music is a bit more interesting. I don’t like the stuff that’s sterile and two-dimensional. If it’s something that’s got a bit more air around it, and a bit more existence, and a bit more communication, and it’s a bit more visceral—then that’s my taste. I’m not saying one’s better than the other; some people like that sterile glitch world. But I find it ultimately a bit lacking in energy.

**XLR8R: What are you listening to? Somewhere I read that you were championing some of the new grime producers.**

AW: Oh, that sort of 2-step...Yeah, I like it, but I’m not a great expert. Every now and then I come across a record of that genre that I can play in my set. I like stuff like on the Rag and Bone label and on Road, and “Switch,” do you know that track? The more minimal ones, because sometimes those records have a more four to the floor mix, but it’s still really swingy. If I’m playing electro I’ll go into that sort of 2-step stuff just to swing the rhythm a bit, just so it’s not too rigid all night. Makes it a little bit sexier, you know?

**XLR8R: Is it weird to have become one of those “tastemaker” DJs? I see your name quoted on every info sheet.**

AW: If I kept getting those, I’d go, ‘Who gives a fuck what he thinks?’ It’s nice that people think that my taste is good, but you don’t want to ram it down people’s throats. It’s like that guy who pops up on the television in documentaries. It’s like, ‘Fuck, not him again! Who gives a fuck? I’m going to not like it just because he likes it!’

**XLR8R: Will you be touring the US this year?**

AW: Probably not. They want me to go on a Squarepusher tour in spring and summer but I’ve got too much work to do here. I’m quite enjoying the level of work. The record sounds so good because we’ve had a life outside the studio for a while. I like that. We’ve found a level where we can go out and hear groups and go to clubs and do some work as well. I don’t want to do anything that will spoil that, because it will spoil the creativity.

*Peppered With Spastic Magic* is out now on Rotters Golf Club. It is distributed in the US by Allegro Music. Two Lone Swordsmen’s new album, *From the Double Gone Chapel*, is out now on Warp.

www.rottersgolfclub.co.uk, www.allegro-music.com.



1. Jerry Lee Lewis—Live at the Star Club Hamburg  
A musical definition of the word “visceral.” Jerry Lee backed by the Nashville Teens destroys everything in his path with a punk rock ‘n’ roll soul whirlwind. This is the trump card in the “Prog rock is wrong” argument.
2. The Cramps—Gravest Hits (IRS)  
The radiated mutated bastard offspring of Mr. Lewis and the next wrenching primal sex beat music.
3. PiL—Metal Box (EMI)  
This record had much more to do with Lydon’s musical vision than Never Mind the Bollocks, being a perfect mind melt of his kraut rock and reggae influences. Timelessly futuristic.
4. Thee Headcoats—Elementary Headcoats (Hangman)  
All of Sir William of Childish’s Headcoats singles over two CDs. Contains more passion, conviction—and belief on one track than most current bands could muster in two dozen.
5. Big Youth—Dread Locks Dread (Frontline)  
The dreadest signals your tiny mind will ever be bombarded with. Chant the rebel sound.
6. Miles Davis—Dark Magus (Sony)  
The reason why most jazz fusion records suck is because they contain little or none of the Magus’s funk, filth, fury and focus. Some of the most physical music ever made. Punk funk.

7. Durutti Column “Sketch For Summer” from Domo Arigato (Factory)  
Martin Hannet programmed some Martian drum patterns and Vini Reilly shimmered and shimmied in the space. This ain’t no Ibiza chill out shmll out—it’s concrete heat haze from the sticky city.
8. Judy Nylon—Pal Judy (ROIR)  
A criminally overlooked Adrian Sherwood production from 1982 that sounds like a blueprint for many of today’s angular punk funkateers that people seem to be in a rapture about.
9. The Fall—Country Click (Cog Sinister)  
900 albums in and Mr. Smith continues to mix two of my addictions
- (glam rock and rockabilly) in a dirty spoon, delivering the resulting concoction via a mercury-tipped hypodermic of an album. Sturm und drang, stomp and twang.
10. Head—A Shag on the Rocks (Diablo)  
Overlooked and underrated punk funk album.
11. Ricardo Villalobos “Dexter—2 Lone Swordsmen Remix” (Playhouse)  
Our latest piece of work. The reason it sounds like it does could be down to some, or all, of the above.

# THE MAN, THE MYTHS

On the eve of his 50th birthday, house legend Frankie Knuckles insists he's only just getting started.

Words: Martin Turenne Photographs: Christopher Woodcock

"I've seen it all before," intones Frankie Knuckles, one of the few people who can make that declaration with real authority. In his 30-plus years behind the decks, the Bronx native has endured the passing of countless friends and fads, all the while preaching the house music gospel at home and abroad. From his first gig in 1971 at Manhattan's Better Days through his early '80s residency at Chicago's Warehouse to his post-millennial tours around the globe, Knuckles is a sage for whom no myth remains sacred.

## MYTH #1: A GRAMMY IS A GOOD THING

"To tell you the truth, I'm just glad that I survived after the Grammy," says Knuckles of his 1997 award. "At the time, it was great to win it, but in some ways it was the kiss of death."

When biographers assess Knuckles' oeuvre, they'll divide his career into two distinct periods: BG and AG. Before the Grammy, Knuckles was one of the industry's most prolific remixers, touching up tunes by underground and mainstream artists alike, from Marshall Jefferson to

Michael Jackson. On the strength of those re-rubs, the producer was awarded the first ever Grammy for Remixer of the Year, an honor that ended up being both a gift and a curse.

His profile higher than ever before, Knuckles soon became a heavily in-demand DJ, one of the few Americans earning the princely appearance fees normally reserved for U.K. super jocks. But for all the perks of the jet-set lifestyle, the producer's busy schedule left little time for studio work. "Being on the road basically killed off my recording career," explains the producer, who had previously released albums on Virgin in 1991 (*Beyond the Mix*) and 1995 (*Welcome to the Real World*).

As the AG period wore on, Knuckles' brand of 4/4 funk eventually got displaced by the florid melodies and mechanical rhythms of trance. Temporarily consigned to the margins of dance music, Knuckles was a man dismayed by the victory of the ephemeral over the timeless.

"The game had changed," he recalls of trance's pre-millennial heyday. "You couldn't get arrested doing real house music anymore, never mind getting signed [to a label]. Everybody watched the whole hard house thing come in on the heels of trance, but neither of those styles ever gave us anything that I would call a classic track."

## MYTH #2: BIGGER IS BETTER

Unwilling to conform to the progressive template, the veteran selector saw his bookings decline through the late 1990s, allowing him the time to refocus his energies on studio work. When he sat down to compose his recent third album, *A New Reality*, Knuckles leaned heavily on his songwriting skills, a talent in short supply in dance music circles.

"Just looping a bunch of samples is not

the same as writing a real song," he maintains. "You can use all the technological tricks in the book, but one thing that technology can't do is make music breathe for you. That's where the human factor comes in."

The human touch, holds Knuckles, is sorely lacking from today's charting singles, most of which can more easily be visualized as waveforms than experienced in any visceral sense. While he sketches out his tracks on a laptop, the Chicago-based producer insists that no song should remain beholden to the box.

"Too many tracks today feel very two-dimensional, in a sonic sense," he says. "Before a song is complete, I have to flesh it out into the third dimension."

After he had finished writing *A New Reality* on his laptop, Knuckles headed to Manhattan's Quad Recording Studio, where he thickened his tunes with the help of his longtime engineer David Sussman. The results of those sessions are plainly audible on the album-closing "I've Had Enough," a throwback disco anthem propelled by a gummy bass riff, baroque trumpet accents and singer Nicki Richards' emotive exhalations.

For all of the album's grandeur, its centerpiece is a subtle piano tune penned by Daisuke Aikawa, a Japanese composer who befriended Knuckles in the 1990s. Clocking in at less than two minutes, Aikawa's "Emotional Energy" is a delicate instrumental piece built around a cascading piano melody, providing a meditative respite from the sweaty madness that precedes it. Knuckles confesses that producing the track proved the album's biggest challenge, as he struggled to suppress his taste for decadent arrangements.

"If I had followed my first instincts, believe me, the track would have turned into something big and classical," he says. "But after a while of building up this huge score, I had to stop



and just break it down to the bare essentials, just keeping the piano and nothing else.”

Preserved as a spare etude, “Emotional Energy” serves as the axis on which the album’s frenetic first half swings into its moodier downtempo conclusion. Split in two distinct halves, *A New Reality* jogs memories of an era when folks listened to albums one side at a time.

“I wanted this to feel like a record from the ’70s,” he explains. “Like an old piece of vinyl which you flip over to find something that takes you to a different place.”

### MYTH #3: HOUSE MUSIC IS DEAD

In the seconds before “Emotional Energy” begins, we hear Knuckles speaking on the phone to his friend and co-producer David Madden, saying, “It’s all over now. Everything’s gone.” The interlude

was inspired when an airline lost the DJ’s record crate last year, but the exchange is perhaps best read as a commentary on house music’s post-millennial malaise. Still, Knuckles is quick to note that house’s return underground is a welcome development of sorts; freed of any pressure (or any real hope) of making it in the mainstream, heads are starting to make music the way they see fit, market be damned.

As evidence of house music’s underlying vitality, the producer maintains that his audience is growing younger with each passing year. “All those kids that were into heavy trance and doing the whole rave thing—they’re all older now, and they’re discovering the music I’ve been playing all along,” he says. “These are people who are 25 and over—they’re not doing the drugs they were doing before and they’re not tripping off into oblivion

with glowsticks. They’re looking for something with a little bit more substance to it.”

With the welcome death of the superstar DJ complex comes a return to the egalitarianism that permeated Knuckles’ legendary residency at Chicago’s Warehouse, whence the 4/4 form emerged. The superstar role never seemed to suit Knuckles, one of the few selectors on the circuit who parties harder than his fans. “Most of these DJs today like being up on stage or in booths that are elevated far away from the dancefloor,” he says. “That’s not me. When someone walks past the booth and looks me in the eyes and sees me sweating all over the mixer, it gets him more involved. That’s what it’s all about.”

Just a year shy of his 50th birthday, the godfather of house is planning an ambitious retrospective next year, as he will tour the globe with a host of collaborators to commemorate some of his epochal remixes, notably Lisa Stansfield’s “Change” and Robert Owens’ “Tears.” Might the retrospective signal the conclusion of his storied composition?

“Not a chance!” he insists. “There’s plenty more chapters yet to be written in this book.”

*A New Reality* is out on now on Definity. [www.defmix.com](http://www.defmix.com)

**“Everybody watched the whole hard house thing come in on the heels of trance, but neither of those styles ever gave us anything that I would call a classic track.”**



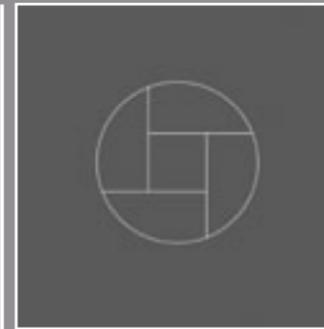
**TOP 11**

**Frankie Knuckles:  
His Own  
Top 11 Remixes**

1. First Choice—Let No Man Put Asunder (1982)
2. Jamie Principle—Your Love (1983)
3. Marshall Jefferson—Move Your Body (1984)
4. Mr. Fingers feat. Robert Owens—Distant Planet (1985)
5. Frankie Knuckles feat. Satoshi Tomiie and Robert Owens—Tears (1988)
6. Alison Limerick—Where Love Lives (1991)
7. Frankie Knuckles feat. Paul Shapiro—The Whistle Song (1991)
8. The Sounds of Blackness—The Pressure (1992)
9. Lisa Stansfield—Change (1993)
10. Loose Ends—Hangin’ On A String (1993)
11. Frankie Knuckles feat. Nicki Richards—Keep On Movin’ (2001)



**AKINYELE**  
*Live at the Barbeque*  
Back when hip hop was still rugged and raw, Akinyele was on top of the game. Enjoy 20 unreleased gems from the Live at the BBQ era produced by Large Professor and more.



**CIRCLESQUARE**  
*Pre-Earthquake Anthem*  
Circlesquare’s debut is a unique mix of brooding and pounding melancholy, bass fuelled sensory exploration, withdrawn vocals, and purest minimal electronic meltdown.

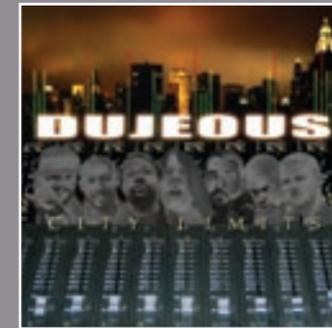


**COLDER**  
*Again*  
Colder’s debut fuses post-punk referentiality, dubwise basslines and lovelorn style into one of the most stunning albums in a great while. “Suave, sleek and debonair, one heck of an inclusive cut, akin to the timeless class of Kraftwerk, Suicide and Joy Division.” -XRAY

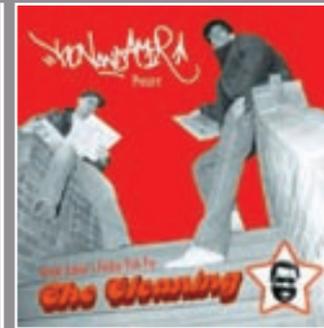


**CUNNNLYNGUISTS**  
*Southern Underground*  
Includes the ground breaking concept track “Seasons” ft. Masta Ace (produced by RJD2) and Tonedeff on “Love Aint’”. This LP will definitely please the group’s already strong fan base as well as a plethora of new listeners.

Join a friendship club, make a difference.



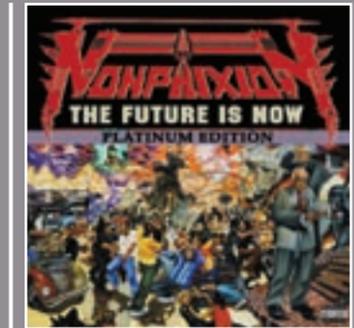
**DUJEOUS?**  
*City Limits*  
The stellar debut from NYC’s 7 piece live Hip-Hop outfit. So good it makes old folks breakdance.



**KON & AMIR**  
*Uncle Junior's Friday Fish Fry*  
“It’s dope and original and it’s a form of music that people can learn from in regards to sampling.” - Pete Rock



**NON-PHIXION**  
*Green CD*  
Over an hour of new & unreleased tracks with bonus DVD containing 2 hours of performances, interviews, videos and more.

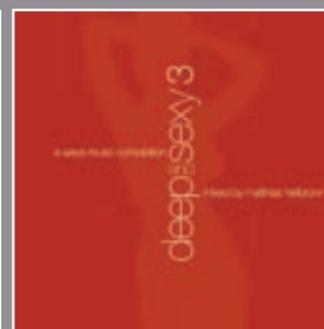


**NON-PHIXION**  
*The Future is Now*  
The now classic debut album is back again with a previously unavailable bonus instrumental CD.

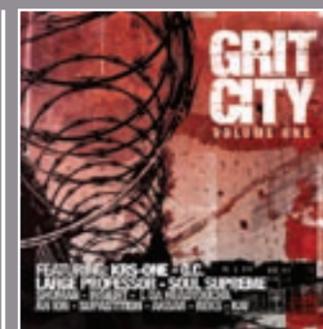
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**SWOLLEN MEMBERS**  
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The fourth installment of Swollen Members successful instrumental series. Highlights the signature club banging energy & fusing elements of hip hop and rock that their fans love. Beats courtesy of Evidence (Dilated Peoples), Rob the Viking Nucleus and The Edgcrusher (Fear Factory).



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Hot and sweaty late-night vibes mixed by Matthias Heilbronn featuring Francois K. MAW, Eric Kupper and more!



**GRIT CITY**  
*Volume One*  
A grimey underground compilation for the anti-mainstream movement featuring new tracks from Supastition, Soul Supreme, KRS-ONE, Large Professor, O.C., Insight and others.



**JOSH WINK**  
*20 to 20*  
Wink drops the Acid back in House with 7 brand-new tracks.

# LEADERS NEVER FOLLOW



Number one hits and controversy follow dancehall's hottest group everywhere they go.

Words: Dave Stelfox  
Photographs: Mireya Acierio



Touch Of Klass, Thugs Of Kingston, Together On Keys—just what *does* TOK mean? As far as the acronym goes, who knows? If you're a member of Jamaican dancehall's ever-growing army of followers, though, the work of this quartet speaks for itself and stands for one thing: quality.

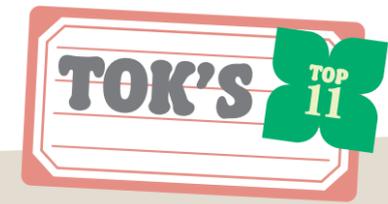
Mixing pop hooks, blistering toasting, a boy band image and ragga attitude, Xavier "Flexx" Davidson, Craig "Craigy T" Thompson, Alistaire "Alex" McCalla and Roshaun "Bay-C" Clarke form the hottest crew operating in the island's fiercely competitive music scene. And with their new single "Gal You A Lead"

(voiced over Massive B's Wanted rhythm) edging close to mainstream hit status, these four young Kingstonians are widely tipped to be the genre's next big crossover success story.

TOK is in high spirits lately, fresh from a trip to New York where they worked on the follow-up to 2001's *My Crew My Dawgs*; their new album is slated for a summer release on VP Records. "We're calling it *Unknown Language* because that's what dancehall is for many people," says McCalla. "We are in the position where we can bring [dancehall] to them, translate it, let them see it and understand it. We want to take

our music to the whole world."

This ambition isn't so far from being realized, if the past few years are anything to go by. "We're always working, always in the studio and if we're not doing that, then we're out touring," says Clarke. "We've been all over the world, y'know—everywhere. We've travelled through America, Costa Rica, Japan and all over Europe. It's hard work and we never get much time, but seeing a crowd that doesn't even speak English at our shows, singing along, bouncing up and down, going crazy... that's the best feeling, nothing's better than that."



1. Music. "Everything about it—writing, recording, performing. It's what we live for."
2. Sex. "Yeah, we don't get a lot of free time, but when we do we like to spend it with ladies—who doesn't?"
3. Diwali and Time Travel rhythms. "Lenky is great. We love both of these."
4. Sleep. "We're always working so much that we don't get a lot, so sleep is always really valuable."
5. Coolie Dance rhythm. "Scatta's the best, and this is the rhythm we did the track 'Unknown Language' on."
6. Movies. "The Lord Of The Rings trilogy was great but it's good to take women to horror movies so they get scared and jump on you."
7. Travel. "Japan is the most amazing country we've been to—the mix of discipline and being able to party is cool."
8. Sly & Robbie. "They're the most consistent producers around. They always do it and have done for years."
9. Michael Jackson's *Thriller*. "The best album ever."
10. Dope threads. "Sean John and Rocawear are fine, but it's good to mix them with something else, like a piece of Versace."
11. Food. "Rice and peas with fried chicken!"

**"We're not about making music to split apart or divide people. We want them to come together."**



The dizzying schedule of touring and recording that has placed these 26-year-olds where they are today may not even have been bearable had they not all been childhood friends; the quartet hails from two of Kingston's most prestigious educational establishments, Campion College and Calabar High School.

Little wonder leisure time is scarce, too—keeping up with the hyperspeed motion of Kingston's studio system and the constant throb of the city's rhythm machine is a full-time occupation. But at the moment Davidson, Thompson, McCalla and Clarke are at the top of many producers' lists when it comes to elevating an instrumental from mere backing track to rip-roaring party anthem.

Their methods are simple, but effective, splicing hardcore chat with bewilderingly infectious interpolations of anything from classic roots reggae to the naffest '80s pop. Take, for example, (the somewhat dubiously-named) "She's A Ho," a truly demented interpretation of Donovan "Vendetta" Bennett's Trifecta rhythm that manages to make a hook culled from Baltimore's 1985 monstrosity "Tarzan Boy" actually sound good; or the gloriously carnivalesque "Hotta Fire" on Fire Links' Mad Instruments rhythm.

"We're all about the party," says McCalla. "We like a lot of different music, from old reggae to things like Prince and any kind of pop music. We just throw it all in there and give it our flavor. It's all

part of what TOK is."

Perhaps not surprisingly, this hedonistic vibe and sponge-like ability to absorb musical styles has helped TOK forge links with another artist not averse to throwin' it up: Atlanta, GA's "king of crunk" Lil' Jon. "We're heading back to America in about ten days to work with him on a couple of tracks for the album," says Clarke. "He likes what we do and he's the man right now—everything he touches turns to gold—so it's going to be special."

And hip-hop isn't the only other style TOK is willing to flex. More than any other Jamaican outfit, the foursome has fulsomely embraced the Caribbean's other major musical force, delivering soca hits like last year's Peter Coppin and Terry Arthur-produced "Dom Perignon," a lurching, woozy bomb of a track based around Busta Rhymes' "Pass The Courvoisier."

"The soca thing just happened after performing in and getting the love from the people of Trinidad and Guyana," explains Clarke. "We played to thousands there—it was so good. We like the music and it works with our style so we went ahead and made some tracks. We can give something to it and it gives something back to us."

On the note of crowd-pleasing performances, stories of playing to audiences in excess of 40,000 at festivals and dances all over the globe begin to spill forth. It's clear that these guys love to put on a show and can't resist spreading that signature good-time vibe. But, as is so

often the case with Jamaican music, it's not that clear-cut. Back in 2001, the crew recorded a sonically barnstorming cut on Tony Kelly's Sashi rhythm that was to propel them into the spotlight. Unfortunately, the track was called "Chi-Chi Man" and contained lyrics that can only be described as virulently homophobic, even by dancehall's standards.

The tune was adopted by Jamaican Labour Party leader Edward Seaga in his campaign against the in-office Prime Minister P.J. Patterson; it has since been defended by artists including Beenie Man as a political record aimed at "corrupt individuals eating away at the fabric of society like termites." ("Chi-chi" is Jamaican patois for "termite"). Sadly, lines such as "We represent for di lords of yard/A gal alone a feel up my balls" and "Rat tat tat every chi chi man dem haffi get flat/Get flat, mi and my niggas ago mek a pack/Chi chi man fi dead and dat's a fact" pretty much destroy this argument.

With all the talk of TOK being ambassadors for Jamaica and for dancehall, is there still any place for this kind of sentiment in their music? Or, will the quartet follow the likes of Elephant Man and tone down their more incendiary lyrics, becoming more palatable to a world market used to the tamer fare of Wayne Wonder and Sean Paul? "We made that record a long time ago," says Clarke. "There have been 200 singles since then and that's just one song. We make a lot of records. We don't regret any of them but times change and now we're look-

ing to do something different."

"We're not about making music to split apart or divide people," adds McCalla. "We want them to come together." (A statement almost word-for-word identical to one made by Clarke in a previous conversation.) "We just want people come to our shows have a great time and leave happy," he continues. "That's what a TOK party is all about. We've played to people of all nationalities and this music is for everybody, not just one kind of person, whether you're black or white and no matter where you're from, you can be a part of it."

Of course, such responses are only really worth anything when applied, regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation, or any similar kind of arbitrary "otherness." In addition to making fantastic music, Clarke and McCalla appear to be genuinely decent, friendly, approachable, intelligent and articulate people—so from now on let's just hope that "everyone" really means everyone. It would be a shame if it didn't.

TOK's *Unknown Language* is out this summer on VP. [www.vprecords.com](http://www.vprecords.com)



## Breaking News . . . continued

by Jonny Park

Driven by a celestial calling, Visionaries member LMNO has created a compelling engagement of message music with "Economic Food Chain Music." On this standout sophomore solo effort, LMNO permeates hip-hop integrity, divulging in an expansive journey of love, life and survival, celebrated through inspirational music.

Amidst an imposingly dynamic backdrop, the intrepid mood of "Economic Food Chain Music" is tempered by an extremely talented and enticing cast of producers including: OHNO the Disruptor, Evidence of Dilated Peoples, Life Rexall (Shape Shifters), Discreet Merchants, J-Rocc of the Beat Junkies, and fellow Visionaries members KeyKool & DJ Rhetmatic. The production on EFCM is undeniably moving, propelled by commanding beats that perfectly compliment LMNO's vocals, resulting in an audio aphrodisiac for purified listening pleasure.

Aptly titled and fully embodied from beginning to end, "Economic Food Chain Music" will rise from the ranks to make an enthralling impact on the pervasive public, blessing listeners with an onslaught of hope. With LMNO's full deliverance of pure heart and soul, this album will truly touch and uplift all those willing to be reached.



photo taken by B+

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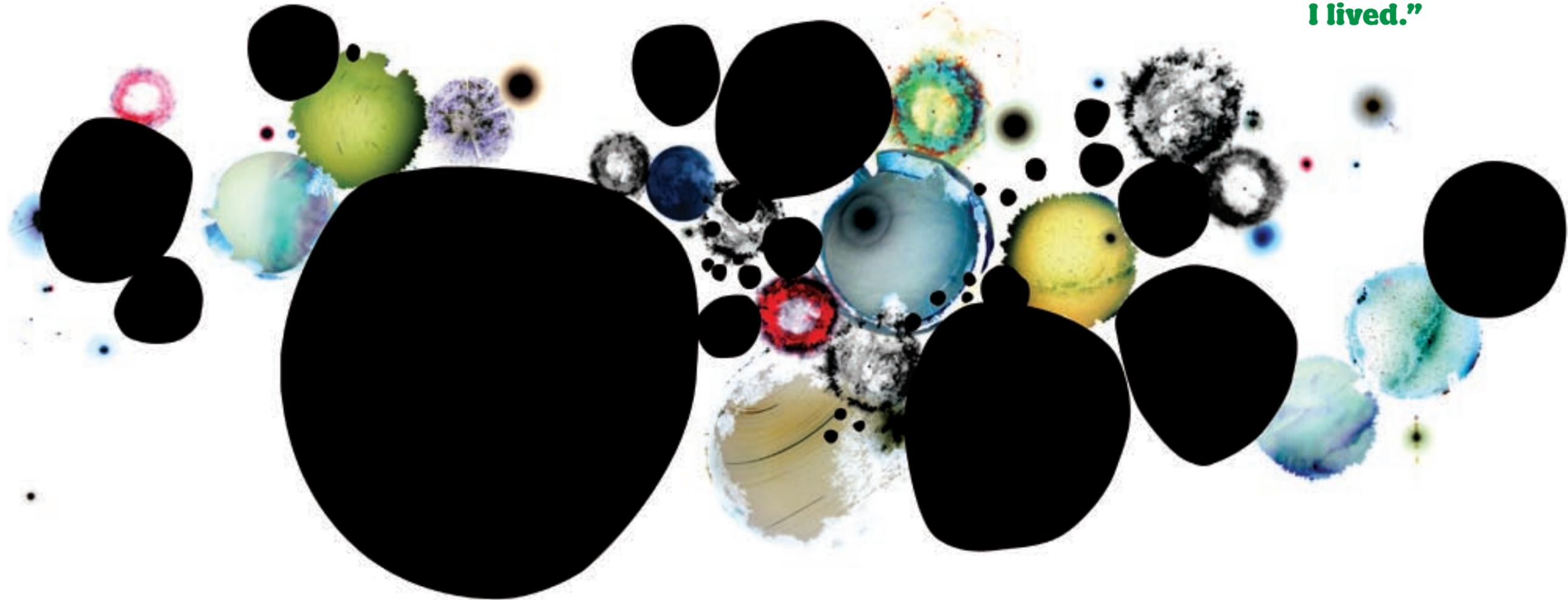
# INTERGALACTIC DUB



With a few dread astronauts in tow, Ryan Moore's Twilight Circus dub project launches its rockets towards the outer universe.

Words: Matt Fisher illustration: Slanginternational.org

**“The whole country was obliterated except for this little oasis where I lived.”**



It's easy to think of Ryan Moore as the lonely martian. The brain behind the bass-heavy rhythms of Twilight Circus Dub Sound System is literally and creatively off in his own world. From his solitary studio in Nijmegen, a farming town in the Dutch countryside, Moore has conjured his swirling, otherworldly dubs from a pile of vintage analog gear since 1995, packaging them with idyllic scenes of palm trees, beaches, pink sunsets, child-like stars and swirls and sending them back to earth with personalized crayon autographs to those of us who are, as he puts it, “down with the Circus.”

But however closely Moore identifies with the extraterrestrials, he is, in most respects anyway, one of us. He craves the famous San Francisco Mission district burritos (sorry Ryan, hot foodstuffs cannot be FedExed to Holland), communicates eagerly with friends via email and tours the world regularly. But until recently, the vibrations emanating from his imprint, M Records, were restricted to the sounds he heard in his own head. “There was already all of these ideas kind of built up and simmering in my brain and all I needed was a kind of chill place to work

and do my thing,” he explains. “The basics of getting things done are much easier if you don't have to fight your way through masses of people or deal with the hassles of a big city.”

By all accounts, Moore had found the perfect place to accomplish his goals. Far off the beaten track, Nijmegen withstood the September 11-induced paranoia that swept anti-immigration conservatives to power throughout Europe, choosing instead to go Green and preserve an improbably progressive rural community. “I saw this electoral map and it was like nuclear warfare,” says Moore. “The whole country was obliterated except for this little oasis where I lived.”

But in other ways the idyllic community, with its bicycles, well-adjusted cows and organic cheese, began to feel a bit isolating. “The downside is that there's no critical mass of other people or things going on to catch vibes from,” says Moore, who stated to feel like he was Catherine Deneuve in *Repulsion*. “Things started to feel like a Roman Polanski film ... cracks in the ceiling, hands coming out of the walls. When that started happening on a regular basis I thought ‘Hmmm, maybe it would be

smart to find some other humans and get out once in a while.”

Moore had been turning down occasional requests for remix work, but was intrigued by an on again off again discussion that had begun in 1995 with Paul Miller (a.k.a. DJ Spooky) about a collaboration. “I was never really technically set up to deal with remixes and that kind of stuff—working with computer files—but once I was up to speed, I saw that starting with other peoples' ideas could push me and pull me in directions I'd never thought of,” says Moore. “It was all very exciting and new, like the *Love Boat*.”

After a handful of remixes for Portland's now-retired BSI records, Meat Beat Manifesto's Jack Dangers and the experimental label Asphodel, Moore ran into Miller in the Village while on a trip to NY. “I'd met Paul years earlier and we'd talked about doing something together,” says Moore. “I walked into a Thai restaurant and there he was.” Miller pitched the idea of a collaboration between himself and Moore to the Tokyo label Play and before long *Riddim Clash: DJ Spooky (That Subliminal Kid) vs. Twilight Circus Dub Sound System* emerged. Unlike traditional Jamaican

soundclash records, where two producers contribute alternating tracks, *Riddim Clash* is a real collaboration.

“It was a situation where I sent over a whole pile of beats and samples and Paul tweaked and freaked some different things and incorporated some stuff into developed pieces he was working on and then sent stuff back across the Atlantic and I had a go at them,” explains Moore.

Both producers are known for their dense production style and mutual affinity for cavernous bass and layered sounds. *Riddim Clash* nicely marries their different musical sensibilities in a spacey trip-hop/dub hybrid. “I've always been focused on the dub thing and Jamaican-style production,” says Moore, “but it was a lot of fun working on some spaced-out space funk.”

Buoyed by the experience and armed with new technical knowledge, Moore suddenly got an idea that couldn't have occurred to him before. “I had this new computer set-up, a laptop, and this light bulb goes off,” he recalls. “I realized I could go anywhere and record stuff, that I was no longer tied to this Roman Polanski studio situation with rabbit



**Twilight  
Top 11  
Studio Items:**

1. Ears. "Essential."
2. Instinct. "To find the way."
3. A clear head. "Focus."
4. MCI analog multitrack recorder. "Rubber band machine."
5. 1950's Telefunken tube pre-amps. "Juicy."
6. 1970's Trident Fleximix console. "Knob fest."
7. Universal Audio 175 tube limiter. "Phat!"
8. H&H tape echo. "Scratchy."
9. Logic Audio. "If you can't beat 'em join 'em."
10. Metric Halo 2882 I/O interface. "Digital funk."
11. Old Fender jazz bass. "Low-end thunder."

carcasses in my bag. I started to imagine how cool it would be to work with vocalists for some of these tunes I was starting to work on."

Dismayed by increasingly tense world politics, Moore began working on the first track of what would be one of his greatest efforts to date: *Foundation Rockers*. "I wanted to do this anti-war commentary and the sounds of the first track evoked a kind of warzone battlefield vibe," he says, describing the genesis of what became the lead track "Love is What We Need." "I thought Big Youth would be the man to lay down the right vocal vibe, so I got in touch with him and explained my idea to him and he got right into it and came through with flying colors."

From there, *Foundation Rockers* simply took off. "It really was a matter of finding and recording the vocalists I wanted," says Moore. In addition to Big Youth, Moore recruited some of the best living roots artists, combining his inimitable dub stylings with the nimble tongues of DJ great Rankin Joe, up-and-coming toaster Brother Culture, the soulful voiced Luciano and the great Mykal Rose.

"The deal is—and this may be a very Jamaican thing, if you consider the kind of competition that happens in that scene—if you can't come up with the goods immediately in that situation, there's people outside the door waiting who haven't eaten that day and they're pretty much ready to rock," says the obviously impressed Moore. "With the DJs, they just spent a couple of minutes with the material and more or less freestyled until we got what we wanted."

There's something loose and spontaneous about the performances on *Foundation Rockers*, an ephemeral energy that pushes the tracks from good to great. In particular, the title track, voiced by Brother Culture, has a gravity and energy that feels electric and unrehearsed. "We recorded that in his living room in one blast," says Moore. "He sent his kids into the kitchen,

listened to the track for like ten seconds and said, 'Yeah, I know what you need' and then he just unleashed what you hear on the track."

Moore acknowledges that the inclusion of vocals posed unfamiliar challenges. "I hadn't had much experience working with vocalists so it was a big technical challenge for me," he explains. "Not surprisingly, the human ear is designed to be attuned to the frequency of the human voice, so if something strange is going on there or if something is even minutely off in the mix, the listener can sense that immediately—fortunately, things turned out okay."

If there's a showstopper on *Rockers*, it's the Luciano tune "What We Got to Do" (both acoustic and electric versions are on the album), voiced with the singer's trademark urgency and smooth flow that weaves in and out of crisp brass and soars high above heavy bass kicks. "Luciano wanted the material ahead of time and he worked on some ideas before we got together to cut the vocal," explains Moore. "But he got so into it he threw his notes away and started coming up with full lyrics and verses off the top of his head." Moore recalls hardly being able to believe what was happening. "It's one of those situations where you're engineering and thinking 'Oh man, I really hope this is recording,' 'cause you can tell that it's just the magic vibe and if you don't get it, that moment will be gone forever."

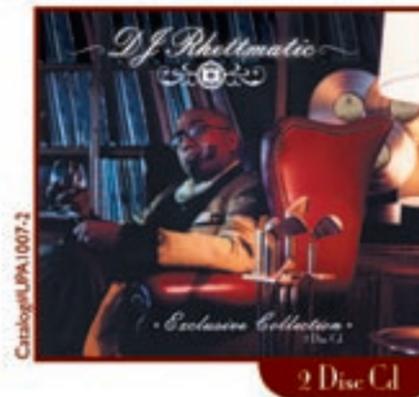
Needless to say, the experience of producing *Foundation Rockers* was transformative and, energized by his experience, Moore has more plans to collaborate with vocalists and producers. "With *Foundation Rockers* I got to work with my all-time wish list of favorite talents, and the Spooky thing really opened me up to new connections and possibilities," he says, shifting into a reflective mode.

"Dub had to be, like, the most obscure form of music when I got into it in the '80s, and for the longest time I felt like this lone

voice in the wilderness." Going from that, says Moore, "to this current situation of widespread appreciation and recognition and influence of dub in music production is very exciting." He may never return to earth, but, in reaching out, the martian has discovered that he isn't so alone after all.

*Foundation Rockers* is out now on M Records. *Dub From The Secret Vaults*, a collection of classic unreleased material, is out soon on ROIR. [www.twilightcircus.com](http://www.twilightcircus.com), [www.roir-usa.com](http://www.roir-usa.com)

**"I wanted to do this anti-war commentary and the sounds of the first track evoked a kind of war-zone battlefield vibe."**



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# VASTLY UNDERRATED

Vast Aire takes on shady promoters, nerd-hoppers and hot-ass beats.



**“Now there are all these nerds at home on their computer jerking their dick to what they think hip-hop is.”**

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Words: Sam Chennault  
Photograph: Brendan Tobin

With a thick, booming voice that made him sound like Zeus gone gully, Vast Aire loudly announced himself on 2001's classic Cannibal Ox album, *The Cold Vein*. Blending a sense of stark, urban paranoia with an abstract, post-millennial dread—which it turns out was entirely justified—Vast invoked the ghost of Wu-Tang's past trapped inside the shell of ELP's numbed funk. He quickly ascended to the top tier of hip-hop's emcees, and then seemed to disappear just as quickly, only resurfacing briefly last year with a procession of freestyles.

On his new album for Chocolate Industries, *Look Ma! No Hands*, Vast—with the help of super-producers Madlib, Jake-One, Ayatollah and RJD2—comes up for air. While there is still a decidedly dark undercurrent, the album is far less insular and seems less captive to its noir-ish setting. Be sure to check out the CD, but for Vast's sake, please don't listen to it on your computer.

**XLR8R:** I have to ask you this—after you guys pulled out of the Jean Grae tour, and with all of the contradictory statements coming out after that fiasco, is Cannibal Ox still together?

Vast Aire: Yes. For the record, Cannibal Ox is still together and will die together. There were a lot of miscommunications during that tour, and Cannibal Ox was lied to about money. So when we pulled out four days before the tour, we only pulled out because we were lied to about revenue, you know. We just backed out; it's not our fault. Our cheese was wrong, and we had to leave. We also had to fire our management team, but that's that. And then everyone was trying to save they ass so they made up a rumor that we broke up, so that's why the tour fell apart.

**XLR8R:** After being in a group where you used the same producer for the entire album, how is the creative process different when there are so many more participants?

VA: It's not too much different. I'm going to get different flavors and interpretations. On this album there are a lot of different interpretations on how to flip a beat.

**XLR8R:** What do you look for when you pick a beat?

VA: Actually, I look for something that I thought about already...*(chuckling)*. That's the best way I can explain it.

**XLR8R:** How do you feel you've evolved as a lyricist these past few years?

VA: It's just a progression. I make a lot of music, you know. This is just a definite reflection of what I like, how I feel. I think that it's very *Cold Vein* in some ways, and it's very different than others.

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### Vast Aire's Top 11 Hip-Hop Verses

Top 11

1. KRS-One—My Philosophy (first verse)
2. Rakim—Microphone Fiend (last verse)
3. Chuck D—Black Steel in The Hour of Chaos (first verse)
4. Organized Confusion—Pharoahe's first verse on "Hypnotical Gases."
5. Raekwon—Incarcerated Scarfaces (second verse)
6. Ghostface—Poisonous Darts (first verse)
7. Cage—Agent Orange (first verse)
8. MF Doom—Dead Bent (first verse)
9. Cannibal Ox—Vordul's verse on "B-Boy Alpha"
10. Jungle Brothers—Straight out the Jungle (Mike D's verse)
11. Red Man—Jam For You—(second verse)

**XLR8R:** How do you feel it's different?

VA: I feel that it's a little more up-tempo. *Cold Vein* is a little murkier; most of the beats are like 86 bpm. On this album, it's got more like 91 bpm, a little more uppity; it moves a little quicker, but it still settles down and gets murkier. It's a perfect balance—it's like yin and yang. It's sunny where it needs to be and it's twilight where it needs to be.

**XLR8R:** When *Cold Vein* first came out, a lot of critics, and fans as well, noted you were different than a lot of the other hip-hop at the time. They used the difference to define, if not your sound, then your persona, as if Cannibal Ox were the "defenders of the underground." Was that ever the intention?

VA: People will make up any illusion in their mind, but personally I just do me, and I'll be in the grave doing me. I come from a time where underground heads were on BET selling 300,000 [copies], you know what I'm saying? Now there are all these nerds at home on their computer jerking their dick to what they think hip-hop is. Hip-hop is living and experiencing, and if you're not doing that then you're not hip-hop. Hip-hop cannot be frozen in a philosophy like a book. Hip-hop is multi-cultural, it's all across the world, and it's here to stay because it taught people how to make something out of nothing. So all these art hip-hop critics who think it's cool to have a hole in your sneakers, and they'll go the extra mile to be holey, dirty and poor...that's fake. You're supposed to be able to pay your rent. Underground is a position and it's not a style.

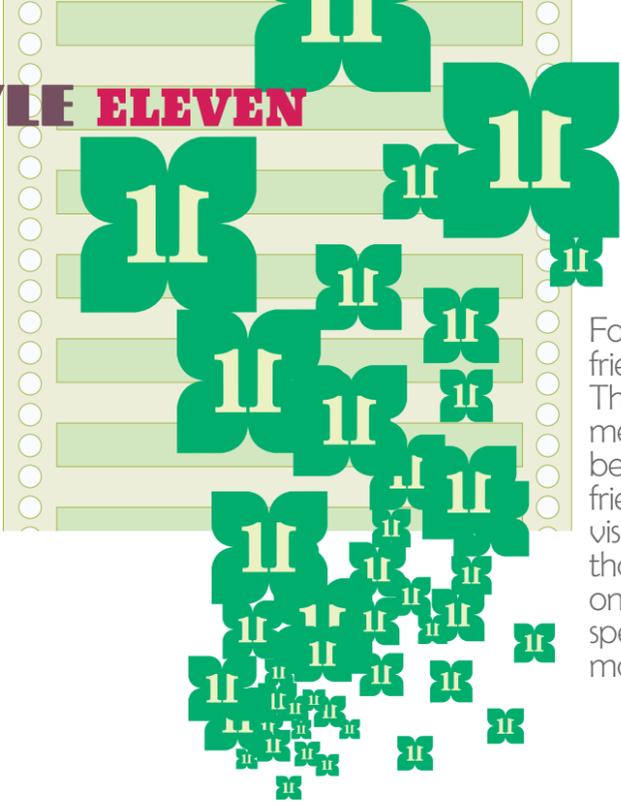
**XLR8R:** Does it piss you off when people pigeonhole you as "underground hip-hop?"

VA: It does! It does piss me off. I just do my music and it's just a reflection of me, and it's just honestly me. My music is just my experience. I can't help it that I'm from the ghetto and have half a mind. And I'm sorry that when you ask me what inspires me, I don't yell out your favorite group. It's tiring, and we're all tired of it. I'm speaking for everyone in my crew, Atoms Family and the Weathermen. We're just some real cats that have opinions and ideas. Either respect that, or don't listen [to us]. Some of these kids think they know you.

**XLR8R:** But when you strive for honesty in your rhymes, as you've said you do, you can't blame some of your fans for thinking they know you.

VA: Yo, but [honest] is all I am. Honest doesn't mean go make a book about what you know about me. Every artist gives you pieces [of themselves]. Unless you're my friend, you don't know me. And people need to realize that artists evolve, and if you don't evolve with them you're left in a dream; you're left in the past. That's like if your mom didn't want you to leave seven years old, and you're like, 'Mom, I'm 13 now, I have hair on my dick.'

Vast Aire's new album, *Look Ma! No Hands*, is out now on Chocolate Industries.  
[www.chocolateindustries.com](http://www.chocolateindustries.com)



Words: Vivian Host

For our 11th birthday, we were going to ask our friends for Transformers and the new Slipknot CD. Then we realized that having six artists deliver meditations on the keen symmetry of the number eleven was a much better idea. From old friends to new favorites, this sextet of American visual maestros have delivered us birthday grams that we think are even better than the pink icing on an x-rated booby cake. Look through this special portfolio, then blow out the candles and make us a wish for next year.



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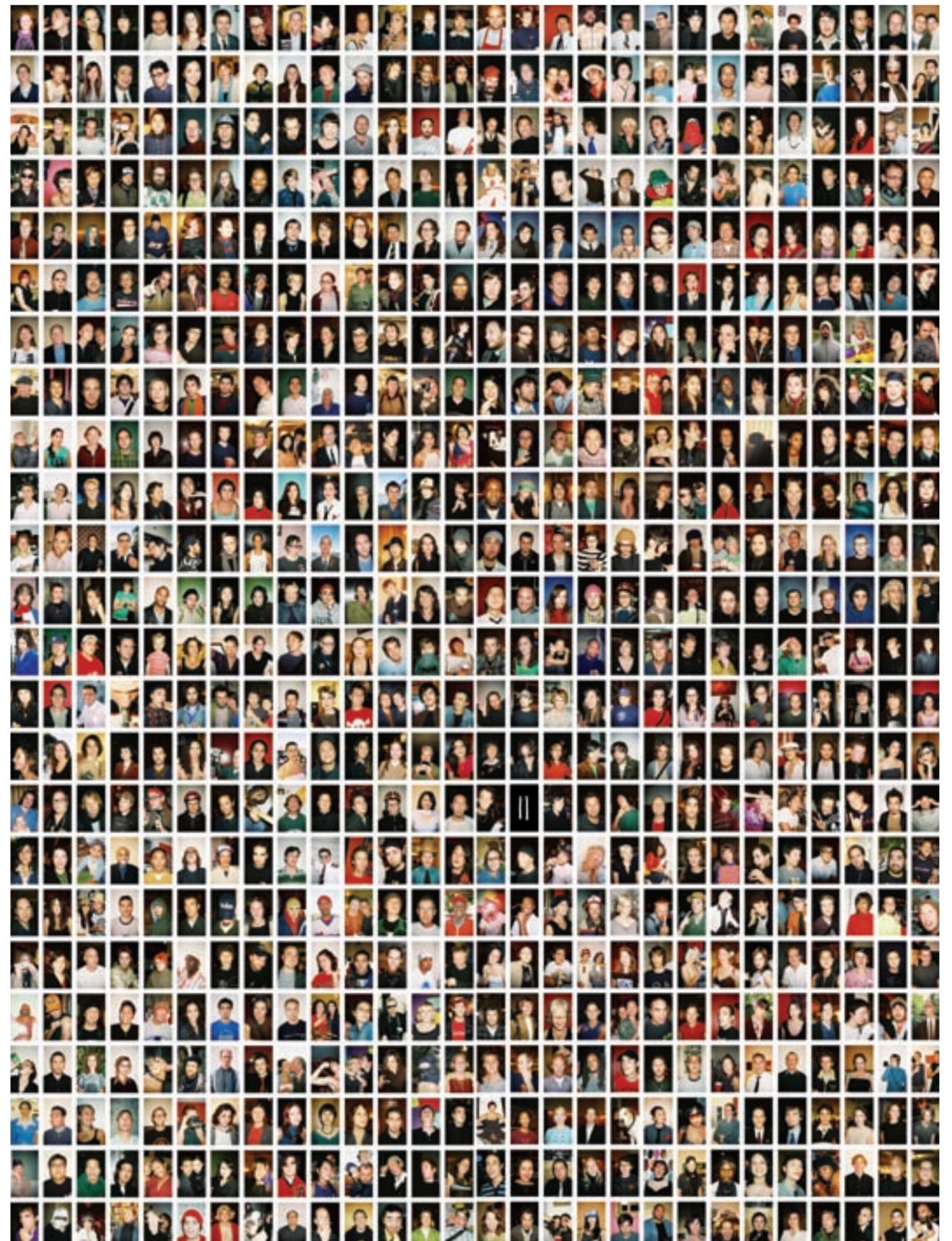
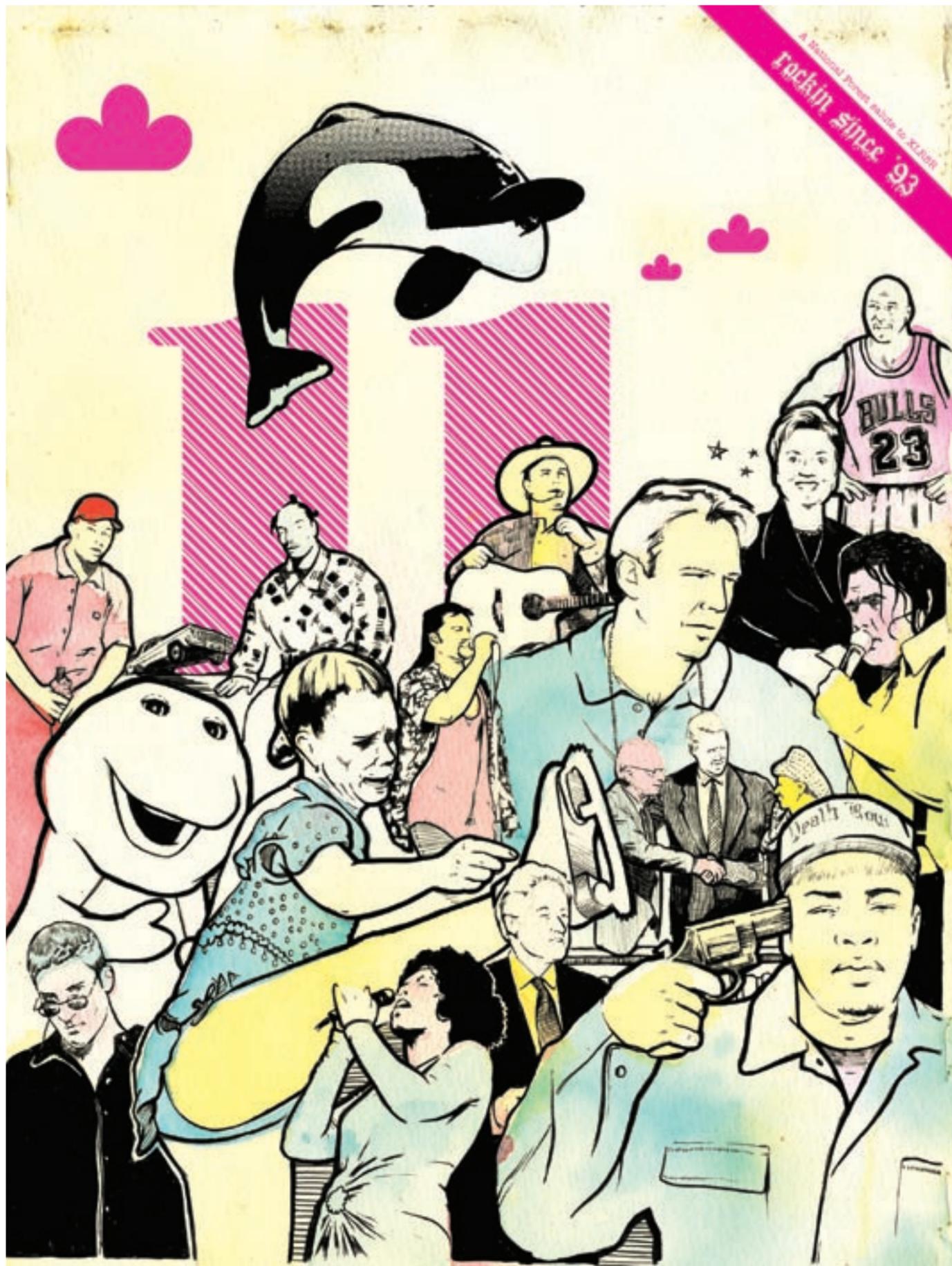
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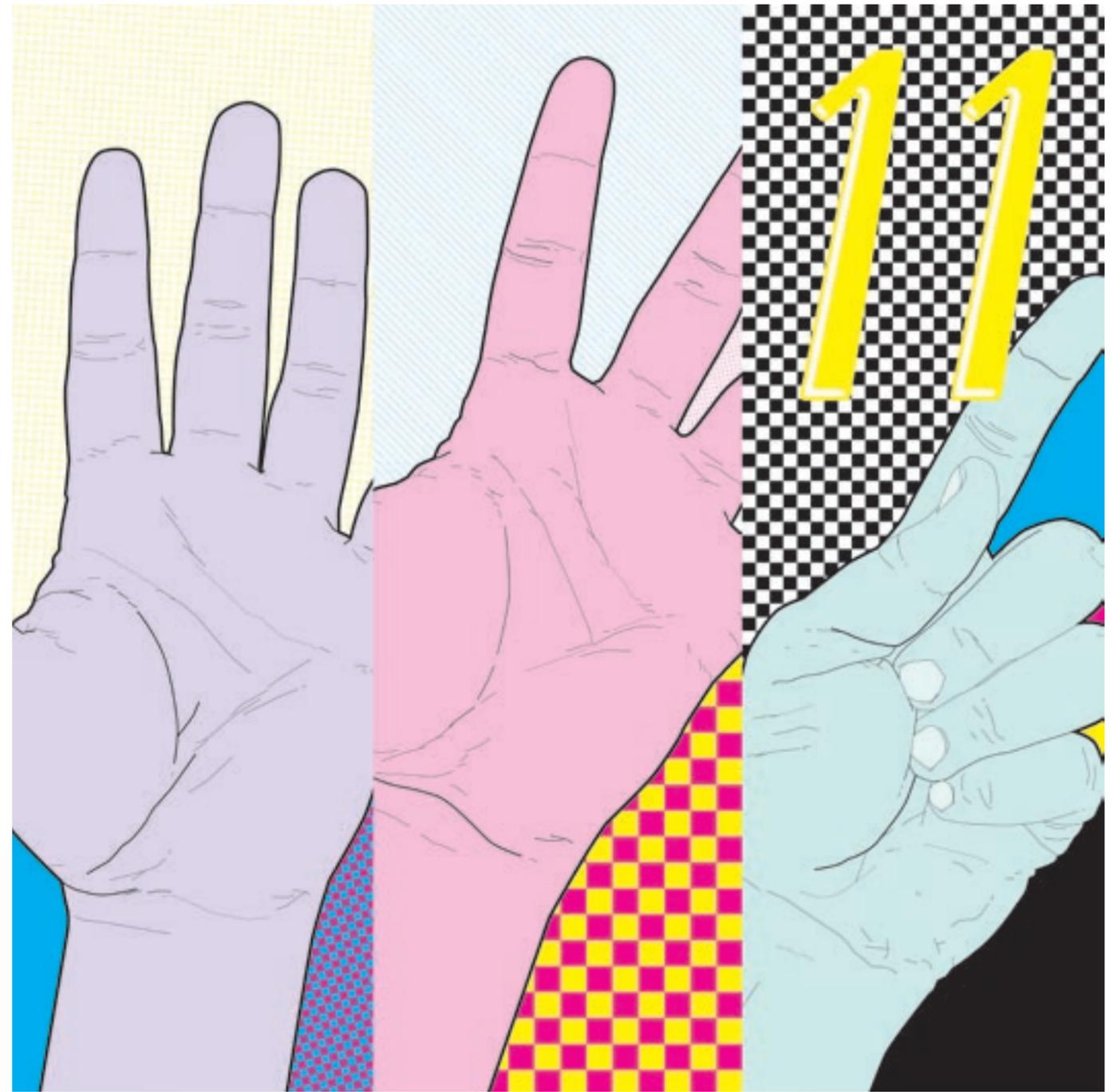


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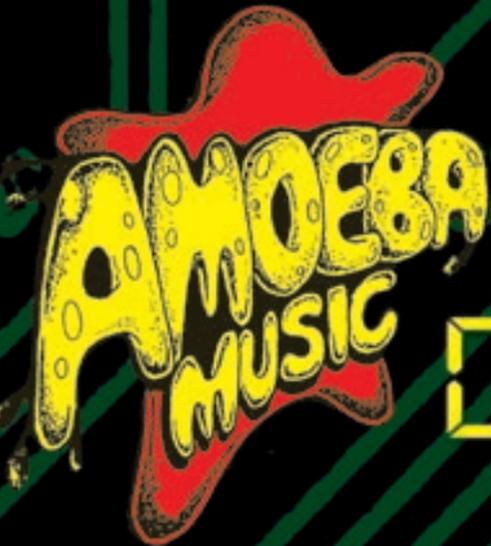


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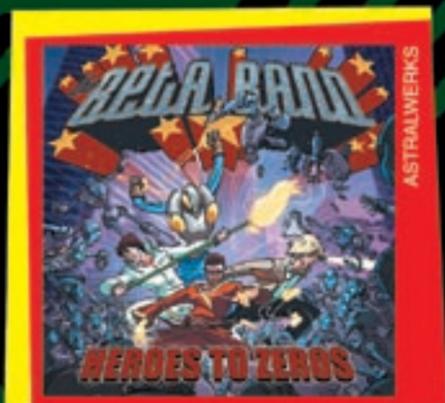
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▲ Wynne Greenwood as Nikki, from a Tracy & The Plastics video

## ALBUM REVIEWS 05.04

**TRACY & THE PLASTICS**  
**CULTURE FOR PIGEON**  
 Troublemán Unlimited/US/CD



In 2001, at the height of the fashion electro craze, I saw Tracy & The Plastics open for the Bangs. Expecting a prefab synth outfit, I was surprised and amused when gangly Wynne Greenwood (Tracy) took to the stage minus big hair, sans attitude and with only drum machines and a video screen as company. Her DIY Casio tones and drum machine outbursts were naive, but not dumb, and her stage show reflected the Alec Empire and Le Tigre ethos that electronic music could indeed be the new punk.

On stage, Greenwood fronted a fictitious trio, interacting with keyboardist Nikki and drummer Cola (played by Greenwood in various outfits and wigs) via video screen. The between song chatter of the world's most postmodern band veered effortlessly from the Plastics sniping at each other in Valley girl accents to Tracy asking Cola why she was wearing a sock down her pants. Yes, Greenwood was making ripples in the male-dominated electronic music world by simply appearing on stage, and then being more entertaining and thought-provoking than a gaggle of laptop lotharios. But her music was also accomplishing what most riot grrls had never managed—questioning gender politics and queer theory in a fun, danceable way.

Greenwood's latest, *Culture For Pigeon* (Troublemán Unlimited), is an apt follow-up to her 2001 debut, *Muscler's Guide to Vidionics* (Chainsaw). It finds the Olympia, Washington native delving deeper into both the medium and the message, presenting songs that are stronger in structure and videos that ditch the thrift-store textures of VHS tape for the tech-gleam of digital. The unique vibrating timbre of her voice is a call to action (or at least attention) here, especially on "Knit A Claw" and "Save Me Claude," which are lyrically oblique but sonically riotous. And happily, while *Culture For Pigeon* contains its share of quieter, almost folksy electronic numbers, it's never maudlin. Electro dance tracks "This is Dog-City" and "Quasars" keep the party going with their Numbers-meets-Devo-meets-Bikini Kill sensibilities. To top it off, Greenwood's soft, murmuring vocals are easier on the ears than Chicks on Speed's clicks or the screeches of Peaches.

*Culture For Pigeon* also includes a DVD of two Tracy & The Plastics videos, part of the basis for Greenwood's recently wrapped-up performance at the Whitney Museum's Biennial 2004 in New York. *We Hear Swooping Guitars* is a video of Tracy, Nikki and Cola at band practice, an amusing taste for those who've never seen the live show. *Just the Beginning of Something* is an even more conceptual affair involving a dog, two girls in a swimming pool and abstract, esoteric themes.

Thematically speaking, *Culture For Pigeon* is typical of a sophomore album. While hardly sophomoric, it finds Wynne Greenwood trying to reconcile her various personas as musician, visual artist, lesbian, feminist and earthling. While her confusing identity politics express themselves only vaguely in her music, they have an obvious effect on her newer video work and her liner notes, which are full of so much circular talk about marginalized groups, fragmented selves and hierarchical dynamics that they would give even the most hardened women's studies grad student a migraine.

Don't get me wrong, I'm glad to see Greenwood growing as an artist. But the initial appeal—and strength—of the Tracy & The Plastics project was its accessibility, and I'd hate to see the pallor of academia creep up upon the already provocative power of her alternative dance party. My suggestion? Screw the jargon. Skip the liner notes. Crank up the stereo and figure out what it means for yourself. *Vivian Hoel*

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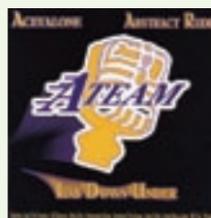
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**ANIMAL COLLECTIVE**

**SUNG TONGS Fat Cat/UK/CD**

Along with friends and fellow psychedelic wayfarers Black Dice, Animal Collective is no stranger to journalistic hyperbole. But for a moment, disregard the wisdom of Flavor Flav. In this case, the hype may be worth believing. Bridging the gaps previously separating '60s acid folk, laptop glitch and 21st century delirium, the Collective's early releases unveiled a beguilingly twisted voice at the cusp of a wonderfully skewed discovery. *Sung Tong*s is the sound of that unfolding, parceling out the group's idiosyncratic acid dementia, elated experimentalism and sun-scorched tunefulness in equal measure. It's the sound of contorted incantations and unhinged shamanistic therapy, the restless, searching yang to electronic folkster Greg Davis' restrained folksy yin. It is the sound of autarkic voices doing their best to crack the grid, destined to scare some and rudely awaken others. *Sung Tong*s is the sound of a new kind of Cosmic American music, and it's alive all around you. *Alexis Georgopoulos*



**A-TEAM LAB DOWN UNDER Project Blowed-Basement/US/CD**

Aceyalone and Abstract Rude can rhyme circles around rap vets, even if their beats sometimes sound like they came from a toy Casio found in an alley off Crenshaw Boulevard. They kind of do on this latest hip-hop collaboration, but that has more to do with a rap scene interested in half-hearted production than challenging hooks found on ELP or Pete Rock's decks. This time, the Lakers-loving (check the disc's colors, y'all) A-Team heads down under for some Aussie flavor, and the results are less than spectacular. Tunes like "GB in Your Life," "2nd Sending" and "Keep Going" are snoozy exercises, but Acey and Rude rip shit on the title track and "What Time Is It?" All told, *Lab Down Under* isn't the best thing the two have done, but it still smokes the salmon out of whatever's on the radio these days. *Scott Thill*

**ATHLETE VEHICLES & ANIMALS Astralwerks/US/CD**

After the punchy "You Got the Style" hit on the island, UK art-pop tarts Athlete found a keyboardist and matured to album-length priorities on *Vehicles & Animals*. On this album, "Refuse put to good use" cover art gives way to Pavement-inspired, Victor [Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, PJ Harvey] Van Vugt-produced smart noodling. Spare trip-hop beats and light guitar underline vocals that wouldn't be out of place in a pub singalong. Song subjects range from light (the title track addresses playtime) to not-so ("Style" tackles the 2001 South London race riots). *Vehicles & Animals* is an innocuous set list for those that dig UK bounce—and by that we mean the Pogues with Zoloff and better teeth. *Stacy Meyn*

**AUTOMATO Coup De Grace/US/CD**

Randy Jackson: Dawgs, I really feel this debut. The DFA's got you sounding like a hip-hop jam band or something. "Capes Billowing" moved me man, with that tight electric bass and cascading piano hook. Y'all have a nice orchestral feel, dude. What do you think, Paula? Paula Abdul: I really love how you've applied live instrumentation and your love of early-'90s hip-hop and indie rock, like Tortoise and the *Kids* soundtrack, to your music. Simon Cowell: That's the problem, Paula. The record sounds too familiar, like they've simply tossed *The Face*'s "100 Greatest Bands" into a blender. Lyrically, Jessie, you are mediocre and the rest of you sound painfully white. Randy: Dawg, what? *Carleton Curtis*

**BETA BAND HEROES TO ZEROES Astralwerks/US/CD**

If John Cusack's bitter record clerk in *High Fidelity* slammed the door on the Beta Band's best-underground-secret status in one cynical swoop, the group doesn't seem to care. They've continued to hone their Anglo-psychedelic craft and now, as duty calls, they aren't afraid to lean a bit harder into the mainstream. This time around, their lancet melodies and post-baggysms are pointedly aimed at the powers of disinformation, political deceit and modern tyranny and it appears these Scots could do with working out a bit more of that aggression in their music. The fact is, the void between radio pop and the judgmental underground is a precarious place to locate oneself and as a result *Heroes to Zeroes* precariously toes the line between good and unmemorable. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

**BLACK DICE MILES OF SMILES EP DFA/US/CD OUT HUD/!!! LAB REMIX SERIES VOL. 2 GSL/US/CD**

With two tracks and almost 30 minutes of percussive suggestion, the latest from Black Dice—those New York City documenters of Gotham's grind—is like the sound of a carnival heard from blocks away. Unlike Black Dice's last single, the 4/4 exploratory "Cone Toaster," the "Miles of Smiles" EP maintains no semblance of momentum. It just wafts by your porch, a tease of submerged tempo. On festival grounds you encounter the latest split from Brooklyn brother bands Out Hud and !!!, which is a reissue of rough material from 1999. Out Hud's primordial elements will be immediately recognizable to fans of the group's full-length *S.T.R.E.E.T. D.A.D.*, and the Casio plonk and guitar/cello skronk coalesce into a skipping conversation between parent and child—playful but firm, squawking like something out of *Charlie Brown*. !!!, meanwhile, is the crowd strutting by, its rubbery skitter-scratch inciting dance riots. *Tony Ware*



**RATATAT**

**RATATAT Beggars-XL/US/CD**

Oh snap, wigga, please! Even the Crest-est white indie boys are down with the Neptunes these days. Swapping the gently pawed Fender Rhodes of Pharrell and Chad for a ferociously repeated onslaught of power chords and raaaawk reverb, Brooklyn duo Ratatat keenly keeps the Kraftwerk homage beeping and the laptop filled with hip-hop boom-clack destined to please the kids of the Midwest. Is this the Postal Service? Certainly not—there's nary a twee vocal to be found amongst this 45-minute compressed cutie of a CD. Bach meets Van Halen in the Krautrock section of *Other Music*? Yes! With their delicate baroque fugues inducing countless hours of air guitar posturing, Flying V-toting IDM in paint-splattered spandex is here to stay. *Brian Paul*

hip-hop positions itself on the edge of the fashion industry—not surprising, considering Tan's day job as video and graphic producer for the likes of Comme des Garçons and Kenzo. Like the best of Output's, um, output, Tan manages the uneasy task of being both hopelessly referential and nonchalantly fresh at the same time. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

**DEADBEAT SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING BLUE ~scape/GER/CD**

Triumphant yet downcast, understated yet epic—these are the contradictions to be found in Deadbeat's music. Deadbeat, (Montreal's Scott Monteith) is a dub minimalist who creates anthemic tunes from the digital detritus of found sound recordings. His ghostly frameworks are both resonant with emotion and strangely lacking in substantive quality at the same time. Rim shots echo like double images in a hall of mirrors as the bass pours forth from the speakers in waves. It's all too common to immerse yourself in a Deadbeat track and realize eight minutes into it that it seems as if only a moment has passed. *Brock Phillips*

**DEERHOOF MILK MAN Kill Rock Stars/US/CD**

Merited or not, bands with an exotic front woman possess an unmistakable *je ne sais quoi*. The Velvet Underground, Blonde Redhead and most recently, Deerhoof, all possess her, and all carry the crushing weight of their possession—because however great the band's artistry may be, they're forever prone to gimmickry. Deerhoof's latest album demonstrates that it's indeed the tunes (and not the three white guys and the Japanese girl) that matter. Across the elegantly architected cartoon land that is *Milk Man*,

the SF quintet stretches pop music almost to the point where it becomes unlistenable. It's an aesthetic so beautiful and dangerous, you'll be sorry you ever had petty differences. *Carleton Curtis*

**TAYLOR DEUPREE JANUARY Spekk/JPN/CD**

This inaugural release on the Japanese label Spekk features one of North America's best exponents of digital minimalism and the founder of the 12k imprint. In spite of some new touches (the micro-fragmented vocals by Japanese sound artist Sawako, for instance), the five tracks that make up this disc do not mark a radical departure for Deupree, representing instead a gradual evolution of his very particular aesthetic. As always, the execution is impeccable, as Deupree makes the most of a small number of finely crafted sounds. Not groundbreaking, perhaps, but still quite lovely. *Susanna Bolle*

**DJ CAM FILLET OF SOUL BY TASSEL AND NATUREL Inflammable/FRA/CD**

Call it any subgenre you want; as long as the playing is the real deal and kind of blue, it's all jazz to me. *Fillet Of Soul* features the muffled trumpet work of Alexander Tassle and stellar sax from Guillaume Naturel. While French (former) trip-hop don DJ Cam contributes (just check his kalimba), his main role is as curator, while Tassle and Naturel handle most of the programming and percussion. Different beats move you from the bar to the dancefloor to the fire-side rug, and you can feel Chet Baker's torment and Donald Byrd's sustain throughout. *Daniel Siwek*

**DJS ON STRIKE! I'M SO HAPPY!**

**DJs On Strike!/US/CD**  
DJs On Strike! fired the salvo that the DJ is not your savior, but a mere editor of somebody else's sounds. So now what? Become what you condemned, and enjoy it. *I'm So Happy!* may be 2004's most half-assed concept record. Kurt Cobain's sarcastic elation in the first line of Nirvana's "Lithium" inspires the title of this 66-minute EP—39 minutes of it being "Silence" that ends with a "bing" nobody will wait to hear. The DJs concoct a roller disco party where Nirvana jams over "booty beats," which would've caused brawls at my junior high in '92. Sure, "Lithium" and "Smells Like Teen Spirit" are seamlessly mashed-up, but none of it moves the soul—unless said soul is lubricated with six pints. *Cameron Macdonald*

**DM & JEMINI TWENTY-SIX INCH EP**  
**Lex/UK/CD**

Neither beholden to underground mores nor reliant on commercial tactics, Danger Mouse & Jemini have colonized hip-hop's middle ground, a realm dormant since the late 1990s. Here, the duo capitalize on DM's *Grey Album* notoriety, reminding us that last year's *Ghetto Pop Life* (from which this EP draws remix material) is ripe for the canon. Tastiest of all the rerolled joints is the producer's 26" remix of "What U Sitting On?," featuring Cee-Lo's charmingly demented crooning and Tha Alkaholiks' lascivious come-ons. Later, "Ghetto Pop Life II" drains the original song of

its symphonic splendor, slowing Jem's boastful hook in the service of lazy summer afternoon listening. If you've got 'em, smoke 'em. *Martin Turenne*

**DOUBLE U LIFE BEHIND A WINDOW**  
**Sonar Kollektiv/GER/CD**

The newest project from Jazzanova's Berlin-based Sonar Kollektiv label comes from an unemployed French kid with a huge sound. Parisian producer Frank "Double U" Rabeyrolles debuts a stunning exercise in experimental hip-hop rhythms laced with '60s psychedelic instrumentals. Like the rich, multi-dimensional style of Jazzanova compositions, Rabeyrolles deftly manipulates a complex set of elements against unpredictable song structures and the result is something deeply stirring. Lonely hearts will shudder at the open vulnerability of Rabeyrolles' spoken word poem "Hard Times," while the melancholy sweetness of the opening track, "In Vain," weaves a tale of dodging disappointment amidst zigzagging electronic synth chords. Easily one of the brightest new talents of 2004. *Janet Tzou*

**ROB ELLIS MUSIC FOR THE HOME VOL. 2**  
**Leaf/UK/CD**

If the name of this collection implies otherwise, the second volume of Rob Ellis' *Music For The Home* could hardly be called calming. Ellis' definition of home may be not so much a place of tranquility but a place where one can sift through these oblique

modern classical piano workouts without the interruptions public spaces may offer. Make no mistake, there is nothing easy listening on offer here. The PJ Harvey drummer has conjured a diverse, challenging collection that locates him somewhere in the midst of Oliver Messiaen, Karlheinz Stockhausen and John Cage. Indeed, it's an impressive feat of composition when compared with the Neanderthal miming most pop has become. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

**E.M.S. E.M.S. DECAL RELEASE THROUGH VELOCITY**  
**Satamile/US/CD**

The early hip-hop beats and ancient synthesizers that once instantly signified hard electro are everywhere these days, so Satamile Records is betting more ears are primed for real electro than ever. E.M.S. brings unrelenting beats and time-tested robotic vocoders to the dancefloor, but a lack of the variety and humor makes this eponymous album seem a bit redundant. Dublin's Decal takes Two Lone Swordsman as his model, letting more blips and buzzes bounce around *Release Through Velocity*. The decayed tunings and the restless spasms of "In Defense Of..." and "64 Guns" will stay fresh long after the currency of your local electroclash night expires. *Rob Geary*

**ENTRE RÍOS IDIOMA SUAVE/SAL**  
**Darla/US/CD**

Argentinean trio Entre Ríos likes it soft, silky and heart-tugging. Their music is so charming and cute yet melancholy all at once, you almost can't take it. Both *Idioma Suave* and *Sal* were originally released in Europe on Elephant Records, in 2002 and 2003 respectively, but Darla couldn't resist licensing these avant-garde pop gems for the States (adding bonus tracks and .mpeg videos). While *Sal* is more developed, both chug tenderly with minimal beats, digital glitches and fluffy melodies. But it's *Isol*'s refreshingly beautiful Spanish singing that triggers a profoundly childlike emotion between pleasure and dismay, spawning pure solace and gentle relief. *Sean O'Neal*

**GM GRIMM AS SUPERSTAR JET JAGUAR**  
**DIGITAL TEARS: E-MAIL FROM PURGATORY**  
**Day by Day/US/CD**

GM (formerly MF) Grimm obviously has no love for the government—unsurprising, given his jail stint on drug charges. On his new album, which generally indicts the police, the feds and the CIA, he often (but not always) pulls off a gritty, hard-hitting street feel. "Stable," with its repeated "you don't understand," sounds adolescent. But when Grimm spits (on the outstanding "Taken") that the authorities get "cheerful" when "we murder each other," it's hard to argue with the man in the wheelchair. Also gripping are a series of Grimm-produced tracks such as "Zero Point," which feature sparse beats composed on a simple drum machine while Grimm was behind bars. *Luciana Lopez*

**GRAND BUFFET PITTSBURGH HEARTS**  
**Grand Buffet/US/CD**

Witty, comedic rap can be a tough sell. Do the listeners get the joke? More importantly, do they care? But when referring to Pittsburgh's Grand Buffet, this point is moot. Dispensing tongue-in-cheek rhymes, irony-drenched choruses and intentionally lo-fi, dance-friendly production, the rap duo Jarrod Weeks and Jackson O'Connell-Barlow shows no love for popular opinion. On tracks like "Americus (Religious Right Rock)," GB's satiric religious/political banter and bubblegum beats, underpinned by the duo's razor-edged wit, induces teary-eyed laughter. Although some listeners might question the creative approach, the candy-like appeal is undeniable. Rap delicacies never sounded so sweet. *Matthew Newton*

**KABUKI SIGNAL TO NOISE**  
**Combination/GER/CD**

When artists make tunes to fulfill their own DJ box—not those of the scene's "top jocks"—it shows. German drum & bass head Kabuki (who also records under the Japanese-themed aliases Makai and Megashira) does just that on *Signal to Noise*, a record that grounds itself in genteel, jazzy and pristine-sounding d&b but also plumbs broken beat and hip-hop flavors. Melding the cool (but not clinical) vibes of Detroit techno with breakbeats, Kabuki alternately hits (with the quirky broken electro of "After the Fire" and "Logic Bomb") and misses—vocal jungle tracks "Speed of Sound" and "Spend the Night Remix" are too light in the loafer—but ultimately pulls off his signature sound. *Tyra Bangs*

**OLIVER LIEB THE BEST OF L.S.G.**  
**Superstition/GER/CD**

If a single artist can be considered most responsible for inspiring rave shenanigans during the '90s, surely it's Oliver Lieb. Ceaselessly prolific in his day, it's fair to say that this German composer all but single-handedly shaped the art of non-cheesy trance under a wealth of different monikers—including his dark, acid-doused work as Spicelab for the Harthouse label. This double-CD retrospective of Lieb's work as LSG gloriously revisits '90s trance dancefloors, with a bonus disc offering Lieb faves in their stronger, un-retouched state, including his gorgeous classics "Blueprint" and "Hearts." Hey, we all twirled glowsticks around once, and—as Lieb gently reminds us—that's okay. *Janet Tzou*

**THE LOOP ORCHESTRA**  
**NOT OVERTLY ORCHESTRAL**  
**Quecksilber/GER/CD**

No one can accuse The Loop Orchestra of being too hasty with their releases: this is the Australian group's third album in more than 20 years. But the patience behind their release schedule mirrors the music they make. The four tracks here were created with reel-to-reel tape, chunks looped over and under each other to create pieces like "Radiophony," where animal cries evolve through the gonging of a tower bell into bass that beats like a heart. The album's overall effect is calming, soothing against the jarring pace of day. *Luciana Lopez*

**LUNCHBOX ANYWAYS**  
**The Agriculture/US/CD**

The Agriculture label's been packing up and sending out treats from Brooklyn that are tricky in composition, complex in reference and totally listenable. With *Anyways*, Lunchbox (a mostly Swiss trio that includes DJ Olive) turns from fragile, gurgling, unidentifiable vocal snippets to thunderous African beats on the thinnest of wires; the resulting filigree of vinyl squawks, stutterstep samples and swaying funk is a tight, fine weave. Key track "Peanut Butter and Jelly" is anything but ordinary with its slurping beat and haunting, minor key lilt. Better than a thermos full of punch and a note from mom. *Selena Hou*

**MAN'S BEST FRIEND THE NEW HUMAN IS ILLEGAL**  
**Morr Music/GER/CD**  
**PASSAGE THE FORCEFIELD KIDS**  
**Anticon/US/CD**

You can't utter the phrase "lo-fi hip-hop" without a respectful nod to Anticon's seven-year-old sonic legacy. These two releases—one from up-and-coming MC/producer Passage (Restiform Bodies) and the other from Man's Best Friend (Sole's side project)—are without exception. Though both albums share a penchant for gritty, experimental production, each differs in compositional tone and lyrical delivery. Passage excels when spouting flowery pop choruses offset by nimble rhymes, while Sole's road-tested vocal style reigns on his debut effort as both MC and producer. Though *The Forcefield Kids* and *The New Human Is Illegal* may not redefine leftfield hip-hop, both albums' subtle appeals are pleasantly surprising. *Matthew Newton*

**MIXEL PIXEL RAINBOW PANDA**  
**Mental Monkey/US/CD**

On their third album, NYC trio Mixel Pixel unloads trippy electro-folk that plunges mercilessly into your bewildered brain with schizophrenic emotion. From happy, bubbly Japanese-style pop ditties to nervous, livid meat grinders, *Rainbow Panda* nonetheless flows with tasteful shrewdness; that is, when Mixel Pixel isn't taking



**DJ MARKY AND XRS**

**IN ROTATION Innerground/UK/CD**

At the dawn of the new millennium, as American drum & bass struggled to emulate the genre's British forefathers, it was the original flavors of Brazil's DJ Marky, XRS and Patife that breathed new life into the scene. Now, after the success of DJ Marky and XRS' anthem "LK" and collaborations with Soul:R's MIST (both of which are included here), São Paulo's golden boys release this beautifully-crafted debut on their Innerground imprint. *In Rotation* turns on a spindle of humid funk that invokes both Brazil's carefree tropical street culture as well as its samba schools' all-night spiritual dervish dancing. It also features unexpected, but appropriate, guest appearances from Philly soul man Vikter Duplaix ("Moments of Lust") and British crooner Cleveland Watkiss, who keeps things cool on "Breeze." Best of all, the duo's enticing departures in style—breaks groove "Terapia" and the housey "Tijuana Frogs"—sit perfectly side-by-side with their dancefloor d&b. Looks like Brazilian soccer isn't the only thing Americans have to be jealous of. *Ryan Romana*  
*PHOTOGRAPH Fabio Mergulhao*

pride in being charmingly annoying. Most tracks mix the blips and bleeps of familiar '80s videogames with a psychedelic landscape of folk rock, quirky guitar changes, lo-fi electronic beats and goofy lyrics. Think the punk of Joy Division fused with the haunting oddness of Roller Skate Skinny or Mercury Rev. Then add some LSD and Nintendo to the mix. Ka-blam! *Sean O'Neal*

**MUSIC A.M. A HEART AND TWO STARS**  
**Quatermass/UK/CD**

Be excited for this post-rock supergroup, whose hefty dub bottom end comes courtesy of Mapstation/To Rococo Rot's Stefan Schneider and whose thrills are delivered by former Lot Fin Killie vocalist/multi-instrumentalist Luke Sutherland. Sutherland's silken vocals and studio prowess made his distinctive former band a too-soon-for-their-time anomaly; this time around, he makes sure *A Heart and Two Stars* is a standout in the crowded realm of mellow, vocal electro-rock. Nothing's excessive here—new sounds really sound new and everything works together to create a fully formed whole. Perfect, just like music in the A.M. *Brian Paul*

**B.J. NILSEN/HAZARD**  
**LIVE AT KONZERTHAUS, VIENNA 06\_12\_03**  
**Touch/UK/CD**

Swedish *musique concrète* composer B.J. Nilsen (a.k.a. Hazard)'s live document will make you drop everything and stare into space. His sound is distant, alien and yet seductive enough to draw you



**MISS KITTIN**

**I.COM Astralwerks/US/CD**

With her first solo album, *I.Com*, Miss Kittin steps outside the electro sexbot role she developed on collaborations with The Hacker and Felix Da Housecat. Replacing the icy and titillating Aryan sleaze of "Frank Sinatra" and "Shower Scene" are a series of tracks that, despite primarily techno backings, radiate warmth while displaying multiple personalities. On "Professional Distortion" and "Clone Me," Kittin gets self-reflective over pealing guitars and electro pulses, respectively, but numbers like "Happy Valentine" and "3eme Sexe" (a cover of the 1985 Indochine hit) show off her softer side, with lush synth melodies and singing that mixes the sweetness of St. Etienne's Sarah Cracknell with the naivete of French pop vocalist Jane Birkin. Elsewhere you'll find spoken word tracks of Chicks on Speed dimensions, but Kittin's still at her best when she's having fun with the techno form, as on the joyriding "Meet Sue Be She" and the tongue-in-cheek ghetto house track "Requiem For A Hit." *Vivian Hoat*

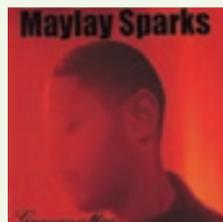


outside your house to drift through the streets, following its trail for hours on end. This 39-minute set at Vienna's Generator festival is a brilliant, watercolored symphony of murmuring drones, winds, thunderstorms, boat rickets and the odd bumblebee that reminds you that you're still on earth. Nearly everything is kept in the same key and saunters in a soft tone without ever pissing in your ear with bursts of feedback. *Live...* proves that we should keep an eye on Nilsen. **Cameron Macdonald**



**NOVEL 23 ARCHITECTURAL EFFECTS**  
Bip-Hop/FRA/CD

Flat, wide golden discs of tone spin along planar expanses, forming the foundation of Novel 23's experiment in building a better beat. *Architectural Effects* is all square angles, straightforwardly melodic, and solidly synth; it so verges on a Discovery Channel-esque vision of the future that you half expect an animated diagram of a space station to rotate before your eyes as you listen. Still, Novel 23's music pleases with its easy symmetry—set your mind to “unmanned flight” and float on. **Selena Hou**



**ORGANUM + Z'EV TINNITUS VU**  
Touch Tone/UK/CD

Finally, a noise record dedicated to the wanderlust of tinnitus! Avant-industrial percussionist Z'ev collaborated with composer David Jackman (Organum) to make you realize just how disorienting yet addictive it is to leave a concert and have harmonious squeals smother your eardrums. Yet *Tinnitus* is easy listening. A soothing

cloud of heavy reverb and flanged air drenches this 16-minute EP into a sleepwalking pace. Added to the ether are soft drones, sporadic piano chords, and light, clicking percussion that brushes like elm branches against the walls of a house. Since Z'ev and Jackman have probably lived with damaged ears for so long, this is their comfort music. **Cameron Macdonald**

**ROYCE DA 5' 9" DEATH IS CERTAIN**  
Koch/US/CD

Royce Da 5' 9" would rather be reviewed in *The Source* than in *XLR8R*, but the Detroit-based MC has—after a dalliance with the majors—been reassigned to the underground. For all his battle credentials, the MC freezes up in the booth, stricken by an inelastic delivery and clichéd subject matter—see “Gangsta” and “Beef” for proof. Still, “Hip Hop” finds DJ Premier in fine symphonic form while “T.O.D.A.Y.” sparkles, buttressed by producer Carlos Broady's piano-dappled backing and Royce's commendably self-questioning lyrics. More honesty along these lines would have been welcome, for the rest of Royce's raps—no matter how gruffly delivered—rise no higher than those of his generic contemporaries. **Martin Turenne**

**SIGUR RÓS BA BA TI KI DI DO**  
Geffen/US/CD

Glimmer, shimmer, pirouette and ping—these are the things Iceland's Sigur Rós capture on this *Split Sides\** performance, a collaboration with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company performed live at the Brooklyn's Academy of Music's 2003 Next Wave Festival. Three pieces by Sigur Rós embody sublimation and evaporation, the sound of a porcelain ballerina caught tick, tap, ticking on a gummy sprocket, then tugging free as melodies billow and retract like warm breath against wintry glass panes. Still, the music is never quite fluid. No closing spurt of distortion or prior amount of poise can conceal that *Ba Ba Ti Ki Di Do* is more a holding pattern for Sigur Rós—delicate and graceful like the figure mounted to a music box, but far from revelatory. **Tony Ware**

**SLICKER WE ALL HAVE A PLAN**  
Hefty/US/CD

The liner notes say “Slicker is John Hughes,” but *We All Have a Plan* is a long way from Hughes' days of dabbling solo in IDM programming to shake the indie rock blues. Instead, this Hefty label boss' third disc is a fascinating mess of sounds and voices, pushing blips against Phil Ranelin's trombone, dub textures against Autotune-addled pop vocals and pressing microhousian gurgles against Dan Boadi's full voice and his own subdued whisper. It's impossible to keep track of the influences and ideas zipping by, yet somehow Hughes keeps it all together, knitting *We All Have A Plan* into a tight package of catchy future-soul. **Rob Cęary**

**SLY & ROBBIE THE DUB REVOLUTIONARIES**  
RAS/US/CD

While the “Riddim Twins” are producers in their own right, this time Sly and Robbie let the Mad Professor twist the knobs. It's a wonder their sounds never clashed before, but lucky for us, all parties are equally immersed in a retro trip. Instead of turning out digital dub, the Mad Professor tweaks Sly & Robbie's lovers rock, the numbers sounding as if they emerged from Channel One rather than the Prof's UK studio, Ariwa. No cyber dub here—instead you get flanged drums, brick-heavy bass and a romantic, swoon-inducing saxophone performed by the ubiquitous and legendary Dean Fraser. **Daniel Siewek**

**MAYLAY SPARKS GRAYMATTER**  
Rapster/US/CD

Rappers sound best when they're least aware of themselves. Exhibit A: Maylay Sparks. The cat can blab about smokin' dutches or doing the nasty all he wants, because, whatever the subject, he'll still sound fresh—he doesn't so much spit lyrics as chuck them at you. This guy definitely deserves the best, sexiest beats and for-



**HORSEPOWER PRODUCTIONS**

**TO THE RESCUE**  
Tempa/UK/CD

London trio Horsepower Productions seems to occupy a unique space in the UK garage scene where they can make whatever they want and not get flak for it. This is a good thing, as Horsepower's second full-length, *To The Rescue*, is in a genre by itself. I'd like to call it dripcore, as the constant between the ten tracks is oozing, dubbed-out Depth Charge-style bass, which snakes its way through bumpy drums, beating congas and curious African and Middle-Eastern touches. This is real jungle music—of the *Heart of Darkness* variety—but while tracks like “Golden Nugget” and “Synbad” could shake backsides, *To The Rescue* isn't purpose-built for the two-step dancefloor. Rather, place yourself between the bass speakers, smoke ten spliffs, and take your brain to another dimension. **Vivian Hoat**

tunately his cabal of producers (the best of whom is DJ Noize) come through on *Graymatter* for the most part. The only tracks that don't bump are “The Suare” and “Head Check”—yo, someone give those joints new boobs and a rhinoplasty. **Rachel Swan**

**STRATEGY DRUMSOLO'S DELIGHT**  
Kranky/US/CD

A skillful keyboardist for Portland post-rockers Fontanelle and multi-instrumentalist for IDM trio Nudge, Paul Dickow also creates microsound compositions that shimmer and expand with wonder as Strategy. *Drumsolo's Delight*, the follow-up to Strategy's 2003 debut, *Strut*, begins with two slices of glistening-horizon ambience buttressed by subtle, subaquatic tones similar to Kranky's Pan American and Loscil. But the next two hypnotic, soulful tracks detour from this comforting placidity into lopsided dub-skank rhythms that would stiffen Pole's pole. “Walkingtime” (featuring Caro's heavy-lidded soul vox) conjures a swoony lover's dub haloed with Seefeel-like shards of guitar. Strategy's finessed fusion of ambient and dub pacifies, but never bores. **Dave Segal**

**SUBJEKT DIRECTION CORRECTION**  
Freerange/UK/CD

Dance music hasn't lost its edge despite what naysayers have predicted. There's still innovation happening, and *Direction Correction* is a testament to that very fact. The bastard child of Auch and Herbert, Subjekt seamlessly blends tech house, minimal breaks and funky basslines, not to mention a generous helping of the quirky. Subjekt doesn't just excel when he's walking the less-traveled path, he effortlessly drops mean four-to-the-floor-driven tunes when he's ready. Hopefully, we shall be hearing a lot more from this elusive producer. **June Joseph**

**SUPERPITCHER HERE COMES LOVE**  
Kompakt/GER/CD

Superpitcher has long been Kompakt's secret weapon—the codeine in its cough syrup, if you will. His remixes for artists like Carsten Jost, Contriva, Dntel, and of course Quarks not only trump the originals but also have become some of the finest tracks in the entire gloom-pop canon. Not surprisingly, expectations are high for his debut album and by and large he delivers, despite a soft patch mid-way through where slow burners flare into torch songs. But on the rest of *Here Comes Love*, Superpitcher's strengths shine bright: chiming bell-tone highs, spongy lows, and a murky, back-masked midrange that sounds like it contains all the secrets of adolescent love. Techno's never been more winsome, or more wistful. **Philip Sherburne**

**TEAM DOYOBI CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE**  
Skam/UK/CD

While many bemoan IDM's creative dearth, Team Doyobi proves that the genre's in rude health with its third album. The British duo rejects presets, plugins and laptops, instead using ill, decrepit emissions from moribund computers to wring some of the most nefarious, head-fucking sounds I've ever heard. *Choose Your Own Adventure* starts out goofing on Rephlex-style electro and spluttering into Sonig-like rhythmic mischief. But after the halfway point, things turn very strange. Tracks become swarms of gangrenous tones and abrasive textures, as TD thrusts you into chaotic videogame cacophonies that sound like Gescom remixing Lucifer's *Black Mass* LP. I recommend ...*Adventure*, provided you're not prone to mental instability. **Dave Segal**



**TONY TOUCH THE PIECEMAKER 2**  
Koch/US/CD

Before you dismiss all NYC mixtape DJs as fronting A&Rs with no skills, you'll have to reckon with Tony Touch. B-boy to the core, Toca came with a pleasant surprise on the original *Piecemaker*. Now, he picks up where that album left off, serving up an array of quality cuts. Sure, he's got some requisite “hot” guests, but Tony also brings Slick Rick, Dead Prez and Juju into the mix—not to mention featuring Large Professor, Pete Rock, and Masta Ace (go ahead and read that again). Most impressively, he's able to make it all work, showing equal comfort behind the boards and behind the mic. If you slept before, here's your chance to wake up. **Pete Babb**

**JOSHUA TREBLE FIVE POINTS FINCASTLE**  
Intr\_Version/CAN/CD

No more bouncy castles, floppy hats and baggy clothing amongst the worlds of non-beat-oriented “ambient” music. While sneezed percussion features in this dense, hallucinatory vision quest of an album, the focus is on assembling minutiae to elucidate the sound-staggering possibilities of electronic music. It's not always easy going—like the ambient of yore, by focusing on the journey, the reward is yours in the end. Happily, that journey is laden with the splintered vocals of Jenna Robertson, resuscitated guitars and burrowing wails of synthesized fog. Forgo the smart drink and forge full steam forward to *Five Points Fincastle*. **Brian Paul**



**MAX RICHTER**

**THE BLUE NOTEBOOKS 130701/UK/CD**

*The Blue Notebooks* is so beautiful that German-born, British-based composer Max Richter should be forgiven for his association with the Future Sound of London's heavily-polished turd, *The Isness*. So luxuriant and melancholy are the piano-orchestra-synth melodies of *The Blue Notebooks* that comparisons to Aphex Twin's *Selected Ambient Works II* are right on the mark, especially for quiet tone pieces like “Arboretum” and “Iconography.” However, this album bears a closer likeness to Craig Armstrong's ambient piano and the hefty themes of Sigur Rós' collaboration with Hilmar Om Hilmarsson, *Angels of the Universe*. Although it's got a chilly autumn feel, *The Blue Notebooks* is worthy of listening to right now. **Heath K. Hignight**

**WORLD STANDARD & WECHSEL GARLAND THE ISLE**  
Staubgold/GER/CD

The persistently out of the ordinary Staubgold presents a subtly delicate and undramatically sweeping reissue of last year's tragically underexposed P-Vine release, Jorge Follett and Sohichiro Suzuiki's *The Isle*. Showcasing a delightfully sublime ear for organic instrumentation without relying on the conventional vernacular, *The Isle* has a heartfelt and childlike quality that doesn't lose itself in saccharine nostalgia. Surface simplicity masks the mature contours and wise intimacy of these compositions. *The Isle* is along the lines of a Morr Music release, but clearer, brighter, and more intelligently executed; it's in line with Sack/Blumm collaborations, but less childish in its toy piano fetishism. Lovely. **J. David Marston**

**YESTERDAY'S NEW QUINTET STEVIE STONES THROW/US/CD**

Whatever you want to say about Madlib, you can't front on the guy's prolific output, which is almost Prince-like in its intensity. This time around, the LA virtuoso freaks Stevie Wonder for all he's worth—which is another way of saying this album is one extended cut-and-paste recreation, combining Madlib's live performance and patented sound collage work with the best of the '70s' blind genius. The results are mixed but always refreshing; some tunes (“Superwoman/Where Were You Last Winter,” “You've Got It Bad Girl”) leap right off the disc, while others (“Superstition”) limp their way to the finish line. *Stevie's* static-heavy listening is a good time, whether you're providing the soundtrack for a night of poker, political discussion or bong puffing. **Scott Thill**

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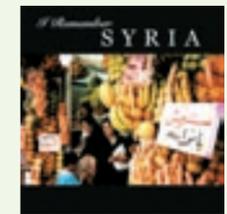
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# COMP REVIEWS 05.04

**RADIO PALESTINE: SOUNDS OF THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN**  
**RADIO MOROCCO**  
**I REMEMBER SYRIA**  
 Sublime Frequencies/US/CD



Most so-called world music projects attempt to expose listeners to rarified music and concepts by positioning them within a construct that's as Western and non-confrontational as possible. Take Damon "Blur" Albarn's *Mali Music* from 2002, the recent *Africa Raps* on Trikont, Frederic Galliano's *Frikyiwa* compilations on Six Degrees or more conventional pieces like Celestial Harmonies' *The Music of Islam* or any of the *Nonesuch Explorer Series*: All isolate the indigenous music of some far-off locale, place it in an anesthetized studio and package it with innocuous photography. Enlightening though they may be, many of these amount to touring a far-off land in a hermetically sealed bubble car.

On the other hand, listening to *Radio Palestine*, *Radio Morocco* and *I Remember Syria* is comparable to finding yourself in the steamy backseat of a taxi in Casablanca, Haifa or Damascus. The driver changes the station every couple minutes, punching preset buttons on an old dial radio and sending a flurry of radio noise, static and the hum of other stations through the speakers. This unique way of knitting together found sounds is beyond pastiche—it's sublime cultural immersion, the unvarnished likes of which you won't find on Peter Gabriel's Real World imprint, nor within the semi-confrontational rhythms of Muslimgauze's vast back-catalog.

*Radio Palestine* is perhaps the most worldly of these three releases, as Western rock themes clash with Arabic pop, Palestinian folk, tribal music from Southern Egypt and European operas. Each of the seemingly arbitrary tracks slams itself together like a cultural train wreck, producing a confused, conflicted mass of cultural signals that sheds light on the societal pressures at play in this troubled region. That *Radio Palestine* was recorded by Alan Bishop in 1985,

yet sounds as though its pieces were pulled from the airwaves just yesterday, only buttresses the notion that there's no "easy fix" to soothe the growing pains of the Middle East.

In contrast, *Radio Morocco* feels less pensive and contentious, and somewhat more at ease with its mixture of Western and Eastern sounds. The French cultural influence on these radio transmissions is clear—sound bites of French pop and French-language news reports appear—but tracks like "Quarter-tone Winds" and "Chante Du Tamri" favor stronger tribal tones and regional music over European influences. There's a greater lyrical quality to the music on *Radio Morocco*, lending itself to easier digestion than *Radio Palestine*.

Where the other two releases feel like compressed composites, *I Remember Syria* sprawls over two discs, exploring the ancient metropolis of Damascus separately from *Greater Syria*. On *Damascus*, politics subtly pervade almost every track; they come through in the chants of a Bedouin child on "Radwan Satellite," and in a young woman's charming and mesmerizing exhortations on "Maternal Bedouin Saddam Song." (Yes, a rah-rah song about *that* former Iraqi dictator). *Greater Syria* consists largely of field recordings rather than radio sound bites; it achieves a more personal feel as it documents daily life in this largely overlooked country.

Like its companions, *I Remember Syria's* greatest asset is its unfiltered quality—an unmistakable sense that what you're hearing hasn't been whitewashed of any political, cultural or philosophical authenticity. In a year when America's political choices will amount to a referendum on the West's cultural, economic and foreign policies regarding the Middle East, Sublime Frequencies provides us with a much-needed dose of cultural reality. **Heath K. Hignight**

**720 REVOLUTION: MIXED BY BLAME 720°/UK /CD**

Definitely one of the most cutting-edge producers in the drum & bass scene, Blame has become synonymous with leftfield-leaning dancefloor numbers that trump the genre's notoriously rigid fare. *720 Revolution* pieces together the best tracks from Blame's 720 Degrees imprint into a continuous mix that should win some converts to his swirling and intricate sound. Equal parts techno, drum & bass, jazz and futuristic sci-fi funk, *720 Revolution* is required listening for those who gravitate towards the more progressive side of the dancefloor. *Chris Muniz*

**ANTICON LABEL SAMPLER: 1999-2004 Anticon/US/CD**

For those not already familiar with Anticon, this budget-priced compilation provides an excellent primer, collecting tracks by the label's extended stable of artists, from the fantastic, absurdist rhymes of Themselves to the acerbic rants of Sole. Despite many sublime moments, Anticon releases have always walked a very fine line between clever and whiny/pretentious, which means this is ultimately a mixed bag. *Susanna Bolle*

**AUTOBOT: ELECTRO IN THE FUTURE Satamile/US/CD**

*Autobot* is an unmixed compilation of previously released and forthcoming bits from New York's longest-running electro imprint Satamile. Far from the electroclash booty-bash tuneage so often in the underground limelight these days, Satamile pushes closer towards the technoid angst of Germany's Anthony Rother and his Psi49 crew. A number of artists from around the world—including Scape One, Silicon Scally, Decal and Airlocktronics—plumb the dark underbelly of the genre, but it's Freezie Freekie, E.M.S. and Germany's Bolz Bolz who steal the show. *Chris Muniz*



**CRAIG RICHARDS**

**FABRIC 15: TYRANT, MIXED BY CRAIG RICHARDS Fabric/UK/2xCD**

Craig Richards deserves a prize for shining a neon light on some of tech-house and electro's most interesting underground producers. A resident jock at London's beloved Fabric club, Richards threads together 37 tracks over two CDs, with only a few clumsy segues and dud selections. The first CD digs deep into minimal tech-house's quirkier seams, eschewing huge peaks for a stream of inventively warped and economically chugging highlights by the likes of Seafoam, Pantytec and Mirwais. On disc two, Richards makes us fall in love with electro all over again, excavating nuggets from the genre's past and present with only one descent into kitsch (Chicks On Speed aping Trio's bare-bones banality). *Fabric 15: Tyrant* ranks along with mixes by Michael Mayer, Triple R and Villalobos (represented here with a slinky, floor-churning remix of Sieg Uber Die Sonne's "You Never Come Back") as one of the most scintillating comps of the decade. *Dave Segal*

**BBQ BEETS 2: RETURN OF THE YAMS The Agriculture/US/CD**

Chill out that manages to warm you up, this collection of 18 tracks (mixed tag-team by DJ Olive and James Healy) keeps the ear engaged while easing the mind. "AA" by OPE sets the bar high early on, with languorous beats and spare instrumentation. Israeli-born Badawi (a.k.a. Raz Mesinai) brings his training in Middle Eastern percussion to "The Approach," a beat-heavy collage of influences, while a number of other tracks, including Nettle's "Firecamp," flirt with dub. The yams might remain a mystery, but *BBQ Beets 2* is a straightforward pleasure. *Luciana Lopez*

**BLACK TO THE FUTURE FiveSix/UK/CD**

The music on *Black to the Future* doesn't shun dancefloor formulas, but reliable 4/4 kicks take a backseat to more complex syncopations. Jazz and nu-soul-inflected rhythms, r&b and leftfield electronic beats all get a chance to vie for greatness here. Highlights include the sublimely gorgeous "This Journey In" by LA's the Rebirth, broken beat cuts by the UK's 4Hero's Dego and Attica Blues' Charlie Dark and Agent K's "Mark 1," a worthy homage to the jazz-funk era. If the beats are still too radical for you, just follow MC Capitol A's advice and "Bounce To This." *June Joseph*

**BRAZILIAN BEATS 5 Mr. Bongo/UK/CD**

If only I could speak Portuguese, then I'd take off to Brazil. I could chill out like Pharrell and Snoop in the "Beautiful" video, absorb indigenous sites and get down to the kind of sounds showcased on Mr. Bongo's *Brazilian Beats 5*. Hip-hop is strongly represented on this compilation, but one gets the feeling the artists have just finished watching *Wild Style*; tracks like Marcelo D2's "Pilotando O Bonde Da Excursao" reek of classic Sugar Hill Gang. Not surprisingly, the oldies but goodies win out over the new material—the big highlights are Jorge Ben's "Take it Easy Me Brother Charles" and Bossa Tres' rare "Imprevisto." *Ryan Romana*

**CLUB SODADE Bluebird-Arista/US/CD**

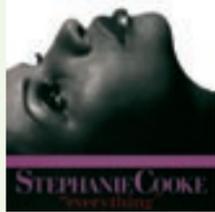
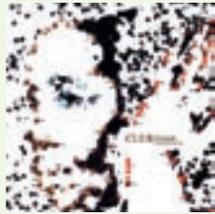
If Yoko Ono is any example, it's chic to embrace your inner superstar in one's golden years. 63-year-old Cape Verdean singer Cesaria Evora is renowned for blending the sounds of traditional Portuguese, Afro-Brazilian and Cuban folk music—a sound that French lounge DJ/producer Gilb'r decided to modernize by inviting electronic heavyweights in for remix duties. The reworkings here are actually quite minimal, and Evora's melancholy, velvety tones lend themselves as easily to ambient touches (Carl Craig's "Angola") as percussive house beats (Francois K's exuberant and masterful "Sangue De Beirona"). *Club Sodade* is a sophisticated way to expand your electronic horizons, and add some spice to your downtempo CD collection. *Janet Tzou*

**DEDICATED TO ALL BELIEVERS: 10 YEARS OF KANZLERAMT Groove-Kanzleramt/GER/CD**

Berlin's slick and gritty surface ripples with a creative urgency that has a special place in my heart. That dark soul is echoed by Heiko Laux's Berlin-based Kanzleramt label, celebrated here by Germany's *Groove* magazine. This compilation details the path of the label, starting with its beginnings in straight-ahead techno-like Johannes Heil's "Paranoid Dancer" and Laux and Sammy Dee's Detroit-fueled "Moonside Playground." It then moves into tech-house territory via hit-maker Alexander Kowalski's vocal "Hot Spot," Fabrice Lig's joyous "Universal Tech," Christian Morgenstern's dubby "Malaria," Diego's speedy "Me Fragments" and a quality electro cut by Anthony Rother's Family Lounge. The variety makes for a fun first listen and the quality of the tracks ensures repeat rotations on your iPod. *Liž Cordingley*

**DEEP AND SEXY 3 Wave/US/CD**

The third *Deep and Sexy* installment from the sages of soulful house, Wave Music, welcomes Matty Heilbronn to the decks, and he delivers a sultry and expressive ride worth every drop of sweat. Garage-driven, but not cheesy, this consistently inspirational mix features familiars from Tom & Joyce, Infinite and ChiChi Peralta, as well as unreleased gems by Sarah Devine, Eric Kupper, and Heilbronn himself. If you want to hear how a New York legend massages house music, or want to get a feeling for the best and brightest producing today, you should put away your aerobics videos and run with this. *J. David Marston*



**DJ GARTH: REVOLUTIONS IN SOUND Grayhound/US/CD**

DJ Garth has that West Coast/London blend of percussive and precision that is as unique as it is energetic. His disco-tech contains "Boogie Oogie Oogie"-like basslines, garage divas and drum sequences that vary from fast and loose to tightly-knit—and it's all flawlessly blended. *Revolutions* presents Grayhound signees (Joshua Collins, Stranger, Ambusher) and some of Garth's new and rare material, including a remix of his Wicked Crew single, "Twenty Minutes of Disco Glory," that has more cowbell than any Full Moon party needs. *Daniel Siwek*

**DJ KICKS: ERLEND ØYE 1K7/US/CD**

As one half of a duo frequently dubbed "the Norwegian Simon and Garfunkel," Kings Of Convenience's Erlend Øye has often seemed diametrically opposed to club culture. However, a startling conversion seems to have occurred. Following an Ibiza-promoted K.O.C remix album, Øye's solo debut, *Unrest*, featured collaborations with ten different electronic music producers, including electro duo Mr. Velcro Fastener and Atlanta's glitch-hop king Prefuse 73. On his first mix CD, Øye is self-styled as "the singing DJ." He adds acapellas of his own "A Place In My Heart" and The Smiths' "There Is A Light That Never Goes Out" to instrumentals from Morgan Geist and Röyksopp to beguiling effect, and draws on tracks from the Kompakt, Playhouse and Telle labels to fulfill his stated role as "host of the party." *David Hemingway*

**DJ QOOL MARV'S GRAND CENTRAL TRANSLATION Grand Central/UK/CD**

Now here's a mix! You can't test the credentials of New York's DJ Qool Marv, and when you multiply his subtle, but razor-sharp, deck technique by his judicious selection of tracks from Grand Central's catalog, you get a record that stands well above most label compilations. There are a few missteps (some of the MCing and shouts out to Marv bog things down a bit) but they're overshadowed by inspired mixes; the blending of the Lightening Head remix of Mark Rae's "Candystripe" with a quick slice of "Stomp" from The Nudge and the mix between another Mark Rae track and Only Child's sweet, uptempo "Show Me Love" are notable. *Grand Central Translation* is a necessary item for DJ's who think it's just about matching BPM's. *Peter Nicholson*

**DURA MATTERS Zod/US/CD**

I've got to hand it to these kids from Milwaukee—they think that IDM and breakcore are going to save the world. Listen to *Dura Matters*, the new compilation from Wisconsin label Zod, and I defy you to tell them that they're wrong. There's some good stuff here—notably, Curtis Chip's videogames-meet-haunted house d&b on "Non-Working Mouth" and the echoing emo glitch of Binray's "Ekward." And even though tracks like Ground Chuck's "Slowneck" and Com.a's "Miami Planet" make you feel like there is a ping-pong ball bouncing around in your brain, that's exactly the kind of music you want to hear when running around a field on three days' worth of crystal meth. *Vivian Hoat*

**EDGE OF THE WORLD Narada World/US/CD**

*Global Rhythm* magazine maven Alecia Cohen selects a few faves for *Edge of the World*, echoing the content of her similarly-titled world music column. Brazil, Cameroon, China and more all check in thanks to contributions from established edge-pushers like Dr. Israel, Zucco 103 and Karsh Kale. However, it's world music's next generation acts, such as So' Forest, Los De Abajo, Antibalas Afrobeat Orchestra and Dhol Foundation who sow the fresh seeds here. Read the discourse, then rotate the disc. *Stacy Meyn*



**BUGZ IN THE ATTIC**

**BLUE NOTE REVISITED Blue Note/US/CD**

With producers from J Dilla to Madlib to 4hero to Herbert, this compilation could have easily been a stylistic train wreck—but somehow it works, and quite brilliantly in fact. Kyoto Jazz Massive goes for a typically broken, space jazz trip on Eddie Henderson's "Kudu," while DJ Spinna takes an appropriately laidback, cruising-with-the-top-down approach to remixing Donald Byrd. Not every new version is perfect (Herbert hijacks Michel Petrucciani into a stuttering mess) but no matter the genre, the fit between most of these dance jazz modernists and their forebears is fortuitous. *Peter Nicholson*

**EXERCISE.003: KLUTE Breakbeat Science/US/CD**

By all accounts, London-based American producer Klute's cheekily titled imprint Commercial Suicide has been anything but a suicidal venture. Rather, Klute's ability to bring together the very best of a wide range of drum & bass artists from around the world has helped push the imprint to elite status. Mixing up a proper selection of past, present and future releases, this mix CD (released as *What Price Will You Pay?* in the UK) contains top-notch contributions from artists like Hive, John Tejada, Amit, Concord Dawn and Zero Tolerance. Klute proves able to represent heavier, more complex vibes alongside straight rinse-out killers, a quality that will steer the label further into essential territory. *Chris Muniz*

**FLAVA/PROJECT X VP/US/CD**

From the important Stateside dancehall mecca of Jamaica Queens, New York, comes the Lady G-produced Flava riddim and Shaggy cohort Phillip Smart's Project X. Both installments solidify dancehall's control over all things innovative, electronic and new jack, while delivering heavy-hitting toasting from Sizzla, Vybz Cartel, Capleton, Bounty Killer and Lady Saw, among others. Watch the females on *Flava*, as Lady G, Lady Saw, and Macka Diamond come correct like jewels on the mic, and General B slams a flow that's sure to move heads on "No Punch Lines." Meanwhile, Mad Anju and Capleton up the ante on *Project X*. These releases set up what will surely be another explosive and remarkable year for dancehall. *J. David Marston*

**HECHO EN CUBA 2 Ultra/US/CD**

On the second installment of the *Hecho En Cuba* series, the Buena Vista Social Club members create songs that are low-key and vibrant at the same time. None of the 15 tracks, which include contributions from new BVSC associate Roberto Fonseca as well as the Afro-Cuban All Stars, have the rip-roaring sound that pisses off the neighbors; but the sense of joy woven throughout this album reminds you that it is good to be alive. Ibrahim Ferrer, well into his '70s, contributes three excellent tracks, and Omara Portuondo shows why she's still a grand dame with the passionate, romantic "Alli." Any of the tracks here would be standouts on a lesser album, but taken together, they go down like a delicious spoon full of sugar. *Luciana Lopez*

**HIP-HOP FOREVER II (MIXED BY DJ JAZZY JEFF) BBE/UK/CD FABRICLIVE.14 (MIXED BY DJ SPINBAD) Fabric/UK/CD**

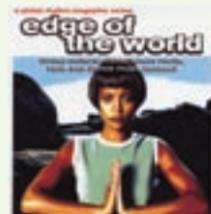
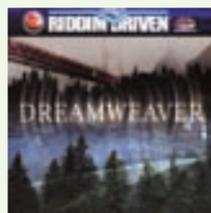
Cutting through the clutter of the mixtape market come two Philly vets, each with a lovely mix to offer. For the legendary Jazzy Jeff, never have the words "he cuts the music with so much class" been so appropriate. Jeff isn't about to get into a speed-scratching contest, preferring sharpness and funkiness to pyrotechnics. And his tracklist, featuring classics by Main Source and Cypress Hill along with newer cuts by the Beatnuts and Asheru, is no joke. Spinbad's mix leans more heavily on time-tested tunes: "Walk This Way," "It Takes Two" and "Got To Be Real" all get the treatment here. The mix is



**SISTA WIDEY**

**ORI[JAH]NAL SELECTOR Ori[jah]nal/UK/CD**

Just in time for summer, the Smugg label gives its catalog of solid reggae tracks over to electronic remixers, who generally use a light touch to subtly stretch the songs rather than radically restructure them. Palmskin Productions' Simon Richmond revisits the flavor of his early '90s productions for Mo' Wax on the rolling groove of Lexus' "Ethiopian." Freerange staple Shur-I-Khan restrains his complex broken drum programming, but reserves bounce and richness for his version of Frankie Paul's "Great Things." One of the bolder reworkings comes courtesy of the Smugg Brothers, whose swirling keys and subtle breakbeats kick up Alton Ellis' "Loneliness." If you're searching for an aural accompaniment to recent heatwaves, *Ori[jah]nal Selector* will come in handy—its modern-yet-mellow spin on reggae perfectly pairs with a Red Stripe and a porch. *Peter Nicholson*



almost too familiar at times, but Spinbad makes it quite listenable, thanks to his considerable turntable dexterity. *Pete Babb*

**I-ROBOTS Irma/IT/CD**  
**WE STILL KILL THE OLD WAY Clone/NETH/CD**

Italo-disco—the mid-'80s genre currently sharing a sex-stained bed in Brooklyn with synth pop and electro—is so hot right now. But unless you're Metro Area or John Selway, you might not fancy spending every free moment calling record stores in Europe trying to track down obscure 12"s by Gazebo and Radiorama. The Irma label has done the work for you, gathering together 13 Italo-disco classics on *I-Robots*. Listening to tracks like Charlie's "Spacer Woman" and Kano's "Ikeya-seki," you see where the artists on *We Still Kill the Old Way* (Legowelt, Duplex, Bangkok Impact, to name a few) got their synthetic hand claps, twinkly synth melodies and death disco basslines from. The robotic pulse of both compilations is designed to make you feel like a gay android on cocaine, but those who like it harder and faster will prefer *We Still Kill the Old Way's* techno pump to *I-Robots'* quaint disco positivity. *Tyra Banqa*

**INDIE SESSIONS VOL. 1 Ocean/US/CD**

This album proves that indie hip-hop can have plenty in common with the mainstream: good production, large artist rosters and the same tired bragging and misogyny that makes listening to the radio so dull. To that end, some tracks on *Indie Sessions* are so trite they border on embarrassing. "So Freaky," for example, is such a standard yawner about freaky sex that it might have been cribbed from a middle-school bathroom wall. Luckily, tracks like "So Beautiful," Divine MC's ode to his mom (which contains a weird wife comparison—say what?) and "Contradictions" from Storm the Unpredictable save the day. *Luciana Lopez*

**KON AND AMIR: THE CLEANING Uncle Junior/US/CD**

Nostalgia numbers are the here-and-now. In other words, you could play Kon and Amir's *The Cleaning* at any party and have everyone feeling the groove. Of course, you'd need to put up with a few knuckleheads asking how—or by what reverse time-travel scheme—'70s musicians like James Mason managed to filch samples from De La Soul and render them as full-fledged funk joints ("Sweet Power"). *The Cleaning* is a product of many long hours spent painstakingly dissecting breaks, combing through record collections, and matching two-second soundbites with their original tunes—and that's why Kon and Amir should get their props. *Rachel Swan*

**MUSIC FOR HEROES VOLUME THREE Hydrogen Dukebox/UK/CD**

Compilations are always a tricky affair—most encourage liberal use of the fast-forward button. This particular volume from Southeast London's Hydrogen Dukebox imprint starts out strong; the Swaymay remix of Norken's "Motorbreeze" is by far the best outing on this entire disc, a low-slung funk growler with a vocodered riff. Things go awry on the next track though, as A1 People strike a pouty electroclash pose with "The Reason." Luckily, Plumbline swoops in to save the day with the beatific strings and serene vocals of "212 E10." The verdict? For every hero, there's a zero to match. *Brock Phillips*

**OSLO SESSIONS Taster's Choice/NOR/CD**

Places like Finland, Estonia and Norway may not seem like hotbeds for club music, but acts like Rulers of the Deep, Nuspirit Helsinki and Bermuda Triangle have done a lot to refute that theory in recent years. On *Oslo Sessions*, Norway's DJ Whale mixes up fare from new-school Scandinavia with considerable skill. However, the compilation gets off to a sluggish start, becoming briefly more interesting with the inclusion of Tony Thomas' stormer "Darker" before veering quickly back to the obvious. Ultimately, *Oslo Sessions* appeals to a self-aggrandizing, big-room sensibility that only suits certain moods. *June Joseph*

**THE OUTERNATIONALISTS PRESENT ETHNOMIXICOLOGY Six Degrees/US/CD**

If the title didn't tip you off to this compilation's explicit ethnic influences, then walk away now. If you're into world music fusion,



**ZOMBIE NATION**

**SPORTLER OF THE YEAR VOL. 1 Dekathalon/GER/CD**

People think that Har Mar Superstar, Felix Da Housecat and Princess Superstar are sleazy, but I say the Dekathalon Records camp has got them beat. They serve up really severe German electro shit that you can imagine yourself hearing in a sweaty S&M basement. Anyone can rap about screwing or snorting, but when Gater proclaims "I like to do it with my friend/sometimes we videotape it/ then we watch it and do it again" over the proto-acid house/industrial beats of "Taboo," it's so feral you can feel your palms getting sweaty. Generation Aldi, Zombie Nation and My Robot Friend get similarly nasty, making *Sportler of the Year* not only a good introduction to Dekathalon's artists, but a perfect antidote to the sea of paint-by-numbers electroclash. *Vivian Hoat*  
*PHOTOGRAPH Tina Weber*

**THE THIRD UNHEARD Stones Throw/US/CD**

Connecticut. The state hasn't been known as a hip-hop hotbed, and is often considered a suburb of New York at best. This compilation should change your mind. First things first: This is old-school music, spanning from 1979 to 1983, and the production reflects that. With plenty of classic grooves replayed by a house band, Sugarhill-style, this will sound at once familiar and brand new. More than that, though, it sounds fun. CT linchpin Mr. Magic's "Earth Break" is a terrific party cut, while his collaboration with the Positive Choice Band, "2001 Kazoos," is a certifiable roller-rink banger. Throw on your bell-bottom Lee suit and give CT its due, y'all. And enjoy yourself while you're at it. *Pete Babb*

**TRR50 THANK YOU Temporary Residence/US/CD**

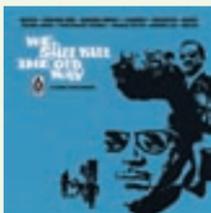
Temporary Residence has just solved the problem of what to do when you're in a pensive, quiet mood but you feel like a wuss putting on Cat Stevens or Bright Eyes. To celebrate their 50th release, the Portland label comes through with 11 new tracks that lovingly stitch together fuzzy guitars and ambient washes with the occasional digital pulse and glitch. Tarentel and Explosions in the Sky make like more experimental, instrumental updates of shoe-gazers Slowdive, Four Tet side project Fridge delivers pastoral sampler pop and Sybarite soundtracks a long car ride with the Arizona desert coming into sharp relief over the dashboard. *TRR50* is destined to be loved like that old, faded patch on your favorite jeans. *John Dark*

**WHAT ABOUT US? Hard Knock /US/CD**

Anyone tired of hearing how many women an MC scores per night should pick up this disc. *What About Us?* includes tracks with a social conscience, focusing on questioning the United States' post-9/11 politics. Blackalicious contributes the outstanding, apocalyptic "Sky is Falling." Zion I reps with the melodically beautiful "Dune," and California's The Piper stands out with the didactic "U.S. History." A snippet of an interview with Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Calif., who voted against war with Iraq, gives additional perspective. "There's those of us who are gonna fight," she says, and you can only hope she's right. *Luciana Lopez*

**ZEN: A RETROSPECTIVE ZEN: REMIX RETROSPECTIVE Ninja Tune/UK/CD**

Yet another repackaging of Ninja's latest, greatest, remade-est, you say? *Zen: A Retrospective* is the label's first actual best-of, mining the album releases of career Ninjas like Amon Tobin and Mr. Scruff for their top tracks. While *Zen* occasionally gets a bit lost in the hazy fog of toothless trip-hop, the best tunes stand out like lighthouses ablaze. Cinematic Orchestra's "All Things to All Men," for example, seems even more epic ripped out of its original context. *Zen: A Remix Retrospective* is a gold mine of the label's weirder remix gems, as Luke Vibert pokes holes in 2 Player's Amen-smashing "Extreme Possibilities," and Sixtoo breaks up Slug and DJ Vadim's smooth "Eddie Brikell" before gluing it back together into a fierce cutup. *Rob Geary*





**HOUSE GUEST  
REVIEWS:  
MONKEY BARS**

Just when you thought *Planet of The Apes* was surreal, high-ranking chimps Doron Orenstein and Gabriel D Vine come to dazzle you with dancefloor domination as simian duo Monkey Bars. Both have extensive experience with jazz composition and performing live, which gives their funky electronic endeavors original flavor and intricate design. Their onstage presence features Gabriel on keyboards and vox, Doron on sax and wind-operated MIDI instrument, and Rachael Hollingsworth singing along. Recent high marks include "Pass You By" on Erick Morillo's Subliminal imprint, "Cash Cow" on Moonshine Red, the "Dudu Brown" EP on Geisha House Music and the "Dark Chocolate" EP on their own imprint, Clover Club. They've also remixed tracks by Vantage Point featuring Terra Deva and Thick Dick. Monkey Bars' debut album, *Food-Eating Food*, is complete and their smashing, top-charted single "Shuggie Love" is out now on Subliminal. Keep an eye out for their forthcoming remix of Lawrence Welk (!) as well as other delicious bananas. *Speed Demon*

**COPYRIGHT FEAT. SHOVELL BULO**  
Soulfuric/UK/12

Not enough good can be stated about the driving funk and joy generated by Soulfuric releases. The live electric bassline is a party in itself, but the Afro-beat-ish vocals on top give this track the additional dimension that makes it a full-on ass-ault for mind, body and soul, or whatever. Badass shit. *MB*

**CONGA SQUAD GOTTA HAVE YA**  
Holographic/BEL/12

Class act Conga Squad hits the bullseye again with this fatted on the famed Belgium-based Holographic. Disco guitar, horns and strings chop in and out of the pumpin' drums, and the bass vibrates in your gut. The vocal is tasteful and sparse. Filtered disco house not for the weak-hearted. *MB*

**BASEMENT JAXX GOOD LUCK: MERE PASS**  
XL/US/12

Once again, the Jaxx blesses us with the brilliant leftovers from a full-length album. This gem features an "oriental" melodic motif, which is craftily developed as it's passed through several different vocal and instrumental incarnations. Funk, melody, harmony, innovative punk-rock attitude—precisely what house music needs right now. *MB*

www.cloverclubrecordings.com, www.subliminalrecords.com

**M.A.N.D.Y. ACHAAT**  
**CHELONIS R. JONES I DON'T KNOW REMIXES**  
**BOOKA SHADE STUPID QUESTIONS**  
Get Physical/GER/12

If Metro Area's Morgan Geist got shot with Parliament's Bop Gun and grew into a half-machine Funkenstein monster whose sheer presence put the bump in your rump, then Berlin's Get Physical would add him to their hot roster. M.A.N.D.Y. affixes disco claps to lockstep android soul, Chelonis R. Jones sings wistfully over Kompakt-meets-Output grooves and Booka Shade is the second coming of Cameo or Zapp as a glitch-house bobblehead doll. Is Get Physical the Casablanca of 2004? You bet! *Tomas*

**MATTHIAS HEILBRONN FEAT. MONIQUE**  
**BINGHAM GO GETTER**  
Papa/UK/12

A house track with an infectious bridge, hooky chorus and traditional pop vocal arrangements? A house track that conveys a complex story of a handsome stoop-sitting thug-playa, counting his money, referencing Michael Jackson lyrics in its moral message? An r&b-tinged house track that features broken beat and 4/4 house mixes with lovely jazzy keys? Heilbronn and Bingham answer all these questions with a resounding "hell yes!" *Tomas*

**SOUL MOTION IT'S ABOUT LOVE**  
Nu Faze/US/12

Sweet, understated vocal house from DJ Romain, this one succeeds thanks to its simplicity and subtle production. Strong vocals from Jason Walker

and Danil Wright, plus uplifting horns arranged by Groove Collective's Fabio Morgera, carry the main mix while "Ro's Sub-Level Dub" takes things deeper and just a bit harder, with the vocal hook filtered over an insistent bassline. *Peter Nicholson*

**BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE HARMONY**  
**BRIO INGRATITUDES**  
Cabaret/US/12

Pal Joey takes us back with some deep and jazzy business. Though "Harmony" gets A-side billing with its plucked stings, rubbery bassline and classic house piano chords, the flip's "I Got the Rhythm" is equally deserving of attention, with crisp "Hot Music" drum samples and a sublime, 4AM feel. Brio finds Joey teaming up with Puerto Rico's Son of Batey at the Candela Studios for a cut n' paste bomba and house excursion. *Peter Nicholson*

**KC FLIGHT SHE'S SEXY**  
**RAZOR CAIN LIVIN MY LIFE**  
Coco Machete/US/12

Straight-up party time from Coco Machete, with "I see ass like everywhere..." lyrics, synth horn stabs and a bumping four on the floor. "She's Sexxy" (out originally on RCA in 1988) gets a modern production facelift from Land Shark and General Patton but keeps its gritty feel, while "Livin My Life" stays on the hip-house tip for the club mixes before going booty-electro on the B with hip-hop mixes. Razor Cain sounds like a coked-up Tony Touch at a Miami party recounting his sexploits in his homie's ear. *Peter Nicholson*

**DEEP THOUGHTS ROTE RIO FISCH E P**  
Auris/GER/12

Germany's Deep Thoughts comes rolling at you in smooth, thick melodic waves, with elements of jazz and soul amidst jaunty kick drums and organic instrumentation. "Rote Rio Fische" has a evocative mid-tempo groove, though "Supertube" is the real winner with its coolly funky melody and infectiously fluid bassline. Frankman's remix of "Supertube" on the other side attaches more of a techy vibe to the track, though it doesn't beat the charm of the original. *Tim Pratt*

**LINDBAEK & LINDSTROM**  
**ALIEN IN MY POCKET**  
Modal/US/12

If you like the slothful dirty disco basslines of Chicken Lips with a new school No Wave edge, this one's for you. Norwegian duo Rune Lindbaek and Hans-Peter Lindstrom concoct a frothy mix of retro-flavored synths with lofty flourishes and bass-driven deep funk. Trevor Jackson and Tommie Sunshine should be hammering this one. *Tim Pratt*

**CHRIS UDOH THE BIPOLAR EP**  
Nordic Trax/CA/12

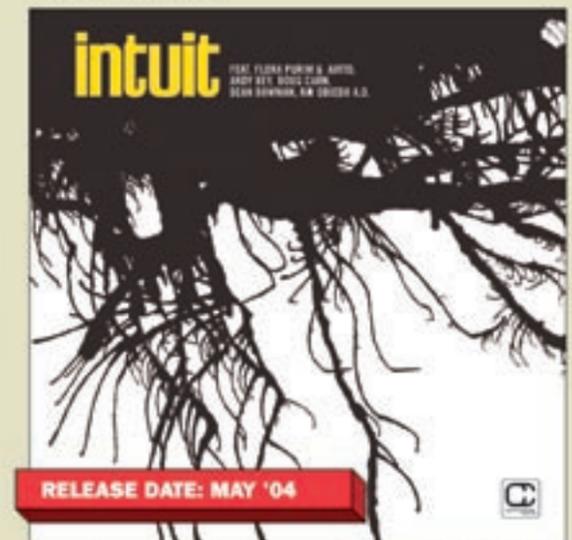
Vancouver's Nordic Trax has developed a reputation for its groove-laden deep house, but former Wamdue Kids collaborator Chris Udoh pumps things up a notch with this thumping release. "Make It" is a dark, late-'80s techno-style midtempo bumper, while "Breeze In the Night" melds dubby gristle with a puffy kickdrum and a searing bassline—and both tracks are rock solid. *Tim Pratt*



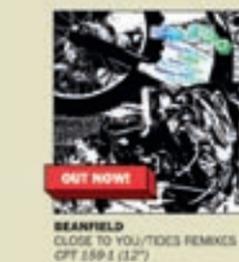
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## TECHNO GUEST REVIEWS: DJ BONE

They don't have time to fuck around in Detroit. You put in work and reap the results. If anyone's due to get some dap, it's the ever-diligent DJ Bone. Bone frequently holds down multiple club residencies in the D amid constant touring and music production. He's been seen and heard headlining the Rex club in Paris and closer to home on Detroit radio 87.9FM. In addition to repping at Motor Lounge, Movement Festival and the North American International Car Show, Bone's recent focus on releasing music has produced blazing funky techno singles that have appeared on the UK's Eukatech, Marco Lenzi's Molecular and Juan Atkins's Metroplex and three on his own Subject: Detroit imprint. Next up for Bone is a mix CD and European tour with Atkins. **Tomas** Contact subjectdetroit@hotmail.com or Real Booking at .818.892.5877.



## AMERICORD AMERICORD EP D1/IRE/12

The Americord EP is a great example of how to keep techno funky and danceable at the same time. Dublin meets Detroit in this space-age digifest where "Sunray" and "Phoenix" are the standout songs with something for the floor. This record is cheered for every time I play it and 95% of the people don't know what it is yet. Americord (a.k.a. Maura O'Boyle) will be around for a very long time. If you ever have a chance to see her live set, don't miss it! **DJ Bone**

## BEN SIMS AKA EMOTE SECOND COMING Pure Plastic/UK/12

Ben Sims' production skills are nothing short of brilliant on this. His repertoire opens up to include "Second Coming," which sounds like a new take on an old-school rave classic. The beauty behind "Image Of...." and "Superstitions" is that they can be played in a banging techno set but also pitched down and played in a house set. These songs are great tools for DJs to create something even greater in the mix. A top release from Mr. Sims! **DJ Bone**

## REX THE DOG PROTOTYPE REINHARD VOIGT HOW WE ROCK REMIXES NAUM/JOACHIM SPIETH SPEICHER 15 Kompakt/GER/12

Cologne, Germany's Kompakt is revered for its reliable, novel output, which three recent releases only confirms. London's Rex The Dog is a head-nodding delight, a mix of plucky nouveau disco and raunchy electrofunk. Reinhard Voigt's "How We Rock Remix" features a pair of blistering, taut techno rubs by The Modernist and Electric Indigo. And the Speicher 15 release offers up an irresistible techno shuffler from Naum and a glistening analog-leaning tune from Joachim Spieth. Kompakt is consistently great. **Tim Pratt**

## DEVILFISH MANGELTRAMP Frequent/SWE/12

From advanced techno pioneers Devilfish comes one of the year's most powerful peak-minded thrillers. Shuffling polyrhythmic tribal grooves lay groundwork for a massively resonating bassline to rip through the mix. Currently caned by top jocks worldwide, this release proved the common denominator of the 2004 WMC techno pool. **PRAXIS**

## RUN STOP RESTORE GEOMETRY FALSE SINK THE SHIP DJ MINX A WALK IN THE PARK Minus/US/12

The latest releases from Richie Hawtin's Minus imprint showcase the label's expanding sound within the minimal techno realm. Windsor's Run Stop Restore's impressive "Geometry"

uses analog keys mixed into a crispy, gloomy murk. Matthew Dear fans will likely embrace his latest project, "Sink The Ship," under the False moniker, filled with fragmented keyboard shards and chopped-up percussion folded up into itself. Detroit's DJ Minx employs chirpy pads and keyboards atop a pinprick beat on "A Walk In The Park" EP, which also features impressive remixes by Dear and Magda. **Tim Pratt**

## JOHN STARLIGHT HOLY VOL. 2 REMIXED Television/GER/12

John Starlight is yet another pseudonym for Munich producer and DJ Florian Senfter, also known as Splank and Zombie Nation. Senfter doesn't really change his M.O. all that much: still the same gritty yet poppy electro/dance punk with treated vocals and shimmering synths. While the original version of "Holy Vol. 2" fits the aforementioned description pretty well, Codec & Flexor's remix is a relentlessly raucous, dirty track that one-ups Mr. Starlight. **Tim Pratt**

## THE BEAT CLUB LOST IN SPACE Electrobeat/US/12

The Beat Club is the electro-leaning moniker used by Miami producer Ony Rodriguez. "Lost In Space" is four songs all thread the galactic theme with thin, metallic electro beats, digitally treated vocals, and harsh synths and pads. The title track is the stand-out, although it's not much more than looming basslines, ethereal female vocals and an overabundance of old school electro percussion. **Tim Pratt**

## BREAKS GUEST REVIEWS: DANNY MCMILLAN

While many breakbeat architects have turned their focus towards the lucrative realms of crossover trance breaks, London's Danny McMillan has steadfastly pushed forward with an honest and artistic sound. In addition to running his successful In-Flight Entertainment imprint, which focuses on the melodic, more tuneful side of nu-skoool breaks from artists like Blu Mar Ten and Chris Carter, McMillan also hosts Fractured Beats, the biggest online breakbeat radio show (on www.ministryofsound.com). McMillan, who also trades as Soul Electric, showcases his sound on the mix *In-Flight Sessions Presents: Danny McMillan 001*, and has truckloads of new singles out with his main production cohorts Tab and Kevin Berber (as Uptown Connection). Having scaled all the small peaks, McMillan's now ready for Everest, in the form of a live band project, Heavy Still. With guest MCs from LA and Toronto, Danny Mac and Co. will be touring the project worldwide this year. This Month, McMillan clues us in to the best his funky dominion has to offer. **Tomas** www.dannymcmillan.co.uk, www.in-flightent.com



## FUTURE FUNK SQUAD SORCERY Default/UK/12

Big things are gonna happen for my man Glenn FFS this year. People know him for his bass-heavy beats but will be shocked when they hear the versatility of the album. This is the first single lifted from it, featuring a British MC with both wit and a tight delivery. Very dancefloor-friendly and a good single to kick off with. **DM**

## BEASTIE BOYS NO SLEEP TIL BROOKLYN (BOOTLEG) White/UK/CDR

I was wondering when someone was gonna step up and give this a work over. The original's tempo was quite fast anyway (no pinky and perky pitching). The booty man who laced this kept with the vibe of the original song and boosted the low end to a better effect. Plenty of guitars and energy to set the room off in any part of the world. Under a counter near you. **DM**

## STICKY FEAT. KELE LE ROC MAN ON THE TV Social Circles/UK/12

Like MJ Cole and DJ Zinc, 2-step producer Sticky has a knack for tunes that wobble and weave but ultimately stay on track, grounded by superb vocal performances and acidic basslines that rotate below the beats like a playground whirly-wheel. On "Man On The TV," Kele Le Roc (who's only sung with no-names like Shy FX and Basement Jaxx) offers her take on Badu, with a complex tale of wanting and loss underscored by Sticky's synth strings. An anthem on par with 4hero's "Hold It Down," methinks. **Tomas**

## JON E. CASH BATTLE Below 40 Hz/UK/12

UK-chart topping Cash splashed down at Miami's Winter Music Conference this year with his bleak and sinister grime sound, countering the city's coastal sunshine with his brutal mechanical beats. Surely he rattled some skulls at the Transatlantic party with his two recent cannon blasts "Kettle" and "Battle." Fans of Dizzee and Wiley will be stuck like 3M adhesive to Cash's brash synth workouts. "Battle"'s typewriter snare clicks and thunderclap accents could fire up an entire Marine battalion before an assault. War music for a war era. **Tomas**

## J SWEET GUTTER (ALIAS MIX) Sweet Beats/UK/12

Plain and simple, grime is the UK's crunk. It's loud, abrasive music that parents hate and politicians blame for societal woes, which means it's the best music on the planet right now. J Sweet joins Wiley and Youngstar as a

shot caller in the London underground; pirates 'luv di mon and shops like Big Apple can't keep his whites in stock. But better than J's electroshock beats is the way that Alias uses a sample to shout himself out on every freakin' remix he does. Now *that's* gully. **Tomas**

## BACKDRAFT LABRAT BAITERCELL VS. SCHUMACHER WHAT'S DOWN LOW Passenger/UK/12

First up on Aquasky's Passenger label is Manchester's Backdraft with the gritty primetime "Labrat" backed by the hip-hop inspired "Lurker," which is sure to have the b-boys doing their thing. Still, the spotlight falls on New Zealand's Baitercell and Schumacher, who lay it all on the line when they bring the pure soul thunder of "What's Down Low." An addictive vocal and heartwrenching bassline form the core before the rest of the tune catches up to the drop and knocks this one straight out the park. **Chris Muniz**

## DEEKLINE & WIZARD FEAT. YOLANDA AND SPOONFACE TRUTH IS A LIE Bochit & Scarper/UK/12

MC Spoonface (I feel sorry for his mum) succinctly calls out all manner of fakes and frauds on "Truth Is A Lie" over a 4/4 acid-garage arrangement, which Freestylers transform into an "Al-Naafiysh"-esque '80s electro jam. MJ Cole clubs-up "Ill Street Blues" with chopped vocal samples, horn stabs and sweeping subs, and the EP closes with the self-evident "Body Popper." In other words, just another hot London street party on wax. **Easy Skankin**

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**LESSON NO. 1** glenn branca - "lesson no.1" (acute)  
first solo record from 1980 released for the first time in North America.  
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**HIP-HOP GUEST REVIEWS: RASTA ROOT**

As his moniker implies, Rasta Root is a man of roots and culture, but don't get it twisted. The non-dreaded DJ's nom de wax is an homage to his Trinidadian heritage, and his cultural references are broad; he lived and DJed in Japan for three years and has toured Europe extensively. He's now in Atlanta, where he founded Smokin' Needles Records with Phife Dawg of A Tribe Called Quest. In addition to making blazing beats for the label, he also rocks clubs all over Atlanta and was kind enough to let us peek in his crates. *Ross Hogg* [www.smokinneedles.com](http://www.smokinneedles.com)

**SLUM VILLAGE FEAT. KANYE WEST SELFISH Capitol/US/12**

Slum's T3 and Elzhi sound dope alongside Kanye West and his signature production. "Selfish" is a feel-good song about relationships, but on the lighter/comedic side. The melody on the hook (combined with the piano lick) is great. Elzhi's verse stands out; even though he's a battle MC, he can still touch the ladies. *RR*

**DWELE FEAT. KANYE WEST & CONSEQUENCE HOLD ON REMIX Virgin/US/12**

Kanye's intro on the A-side is a cool addition—maybe even video worthy. As always, Dwele sounds dope on everything he touches. Unfortunately, the remix beat with Consequence and Kanye doesn't do Dwele justice. It was obviously just his original vocals over a stripped-down Kanye percussion beat. A remix is supposed to be better than the original; this is just an alternate mix for DJs. Original version wins. *RR*

**SLEEPY BROWN FEAT. OUTKAST I CAN'T WAIT Interscope/US/12**

When I hear this, I think of three totally different songs. That's what I like about it. Dre sets it off over a minimalist beat with warm, ambient keys, allowing his Andre 1000 (circa '94) lyrics to come out. Sleepy kills the hook/bridge when that crazy sample comes in, and Big Boi tops it off with his usual smooth flow. I can't wait for Sleepy's album. *RR*

**INSIGHT EVOLVE EP Brick/US/12**

Boston MC/producer/photographer Insight keeps DJs and conscious hip-hop heads in mind on his new EP. With three jazzed-out tracks (plus instrumentals), DJ tools and a scholarly spoken word interlude, Insight shows reverence to traditional hip-hop while innovating the genre. "Evolve," "Daily Routine" and "Inventors (Black)" are all compelling edutainment jams. With more than 20 releases under his belt and a dope-ass web(sight), [www.insight.fm](http://www.insight.fm), it's time to pop a No-Doz and wake up to this huge talent. *Tomas*

**THE CONNOISSEURS U.V. Dis-Joint/US/12**

"U.V." is the debut from The Connoisseurs: Freestyle Fellowship alumnus P.E.A.C.E., Deranged and Mawnstr and inspired beatmaker N.O. The track finds P.E.A.C.E. pacing his trademark supersonic robotic rhymes over an uptempo beat with searing guitars and crazed cowbells. His co-flowers more than hold their own—no small feat—and on "R&B" they keep the rapid-fire rhymes comin' over a syncopated drum pattern. *Ross Hogg*

**LION KING SOUND SOUND KLASH AMMO V. 3 DeadlyMix.com/US/LP**

The problem with mash-ups is that they tend to sound, you know, mashed up. The Sound Klash Ammo series avoids such pitfalls by marrying big tunes from both hip-hop and dancehall and adding flourishes that make them better than the originals. If you're a club DJ, can you really go wrong with Jay Z over Lil' Jon, Beyonce over the Coolie Dance riddim and Usher over the Salsa riddim? As a bonus, each volume ends with clash sounds. Anything test, dead. *Ross Hogg*

**EYEDEA & ABILITIES NOW MASS HYSTERIA IT AIN'T SAFE Rhymesayers/US/12**

E&A makes it happen with the scratchin' and rappin' on "Now," a balls-out exercise in breath control and turntablism over double-time drums and subtle sats. The lightning-round rhymes and incredible cuts aren't gimmicky; rather, they're greater than their sum. Mass Hysteria's "It Ain't Safe" is different but still dope—a mid-tempo banger produced by Dug Infinite on which the crew "slow flows y'all to death" over slick Biggie samples. But

the dark SC (Mobb Deep)-produced "Fall Out" kills it, thanks to Presyce's cuts and a guest verse from Chicago battle legend J.U.I.C.E. *Ross Hogg*

**SOULSTICE THE MELODY North by Northwest/US/12**

SoulStice, here's your hip-hop report card. Lyric Delivery: A-. Your complex wordplay is impressive. Have you been studying with Akbar? Beats and Production: B+. Why? Well, you sampled Quincy Jones's "Summer In The City"—and nicely—but it's been done, plus the tempos of "Sleepwalk" and "The Melody" are lethargic. Overall style: A. You had the class's heads nodding and deserve a teacher's merit for your attention to detail. I see you graduating from Chicago and on to global greatness. *Tomas*

**MR. COMPLEX FEAT BIZ MARKIE & EL FUDGE GLUE 72 Records/UK/12**

Complex pens a twisted love song where he waxes lyrical about using hardware store items for bondage sex and spits verses such as "Like Rainy Smurf, I know this turf/And if you get lost, I'll ransack the earth/to get you back, yo I'd break my back...".

Biz sings the chorus over beats from Beyond There (Unsung Heroes, T-Love). El Fudge appears on the flip, "Scrape Your Back Out"—more messy romance talk. Well done, but holla at me if this gets played anywhere save a junior college dorm room. *Derek Grey*

**THE SOLUTION BIT\*H Netweight/US/12**

So the feminists don't get the title twisted—The Solution (Amad Jamal and Brisk-One from 1200 Hobos) scratch Chuck D's famous line, "Once again, back is the incredible," letting you know that the acronym refers to "back-in-the-\*-house." And back they are: Brisk straps dynamite to his classic soul 45 box and blows it into shreds of boom, bap and melody, with precise cuts like DJ Revolution. Defari joins the team for "Regardless," while "The Oath" is more Stax-hop goodness. Another great New England label emerges. *Tomas*

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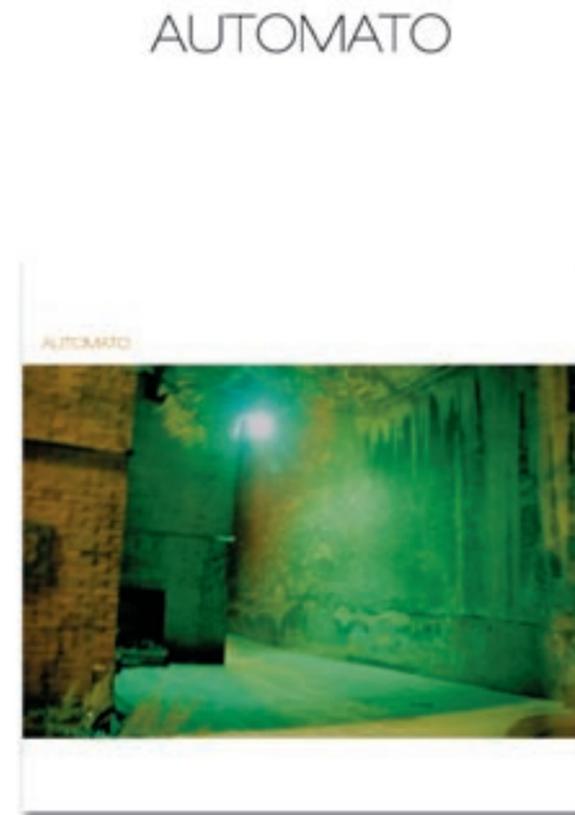
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**DRUM & BASS GUEST REVIEWS: NOOKIE**



It wasn't long after Gavin Cheung's 1993 Moving Shadow debut "You Got Me Burning" (as Cloud 9) that his balmy synth pads and melodic, song-based proto-drum & bass became a recognizable sound, then an institution. How did the university-trained computer programmer so quickly become a revered dance music representative? Raves, Reinforced and releases. His string of singles as Nookie in '93 and '94 on Reinforced, Moving Shadow and Labello Blanco attracted a worldwide following in the exploding global rave scene, which opened the doors for his first album, *The Sound of Music*, on Reinforced in 1995. Cheung cranked out some 30 more singles for these labels (including 11 singles featuring house legend Larry "Mr. Fingers" Heard), then launched into a successful run with LTJ Bukem's Good Looking imprint. But who knew that before all the acclaim and fame he was the hand behind the UK ragga-hip-hop remixes of Flourgon & Ninjaman's "Zig It Up" (Sure Delight/Jetstar) and Cutty Ranks' "The Stopper" (Fashion)? Cheung's early music still sounds fresh, and he hasn't stopped creating or DJing. Here are a few of his latest picks. *Tomas*

**CALIBRE HIGHLANDER Signature/UK/12**

Calibre is the man of the moment and this single proves the rep is well justified. "Highlander" is on a dubby rollin' lick; a heavy bassline grooves nicely with some clever percussion work to compliment the straight-patterned Amen break. The flip, "Mr. Maverick," starts with a nice string section that builds up nicely into a heavy bassline drop using the much-loved Lyn Collins break. Serious release. *Nookie*

**LAROQUE GOLDFINGER Hospital/UK/12**

This has been smashing the dancefloors for the last several months and is instantly recognizable by its massive "James Bond"-style breakdown and female vocals. This kicks in to an absolute stomper! The tune is simple but very effective; everything in the right place, all working together in harmony. Very different to his other releases—the man is versatile! One to watch. *Nookie*

**DJ CRYSTL LET IT ROLL Photek/UK/12**

After a stint in hip-hop, DJ Crystl returns with 2004 remixes of his essential anthems. The new version of "Let It Roll" from 1994 is even more heavy and spine-tingling than the original; its pulsing intro employs every dark Metalheadz drum trick before dropping into a pounding, choppy break workout and scary breakdown that will raise the hairs on your neck. 1993's "Warpdrive" gets turned into an evil monster whose samples take you straight back to the illegal rave days but whose drums are modern to the core. Blazing hot! *Star Eyes*

**DISTORTED MINDS ROAD RAGE D-Style/UK/12**

Bristol's Distorted ones team up with Moving Shadow's EZ Rollers for some serious clown step on "Road Rage," where an overly-dramatic intro that sounds like TV cop show theme music turns into a sledgehammer of monkey bass and pounding breaks. Flip for the more favorable "Another Fight," a rave-ready roller that pairs squelchy techno bass and crispy breaks for a retro '97 jump-up vibe. *Star Eyes*

**DANNY C WARHEADZ EP Metalheadz/UK/2x12**

Danny C makes mellow rollers and the rough stuff, but on this EP for Metalheadz he puts on the boxing gloves and throws down in the ring. Those who like their drum & bass dark and blistering will love the anthemic hammering of "Long Road" and the

complex drums of "Feel," but the real deal are two mixes of "Warheadz" filled with freaky samples, two-stepping drums and apocalyptic Mentasm stabs. *Star Eyes*

**SONIC RETROTHRUSTER SONIC RUSHOLME Space/UK/12**

Recently relocated to Vietnam, it's good to see label-boss Sonic still pushing the tunes on through. We're not sure if it's his new digs, but there's definitely a noticeable progression underway that begins with the jazzy sample bed of "Retrothruster," pushes on through the ethereal piano and atmosphere-driven "The Big Blue" and finally settles down in the exotic flavor of "Rusholme" and "Kashmiri Twist." With the same emotional vulnerability and eye on experimentation that's always refreshing to witness, Sonic never loses sight of the dance-floor. *Chris Muniz*

**NUCLEUS & PARADOX THINK ABOUT IT Offshore/US/12**

Is it '94 or '04? These days it's tough to tell, but that's not always a bad thing. Take the extra-classic rolling drum break of the James Brown-produced "Think" by Lyn Collins, a d&b staple that gets sampled again by N&P and thrown in their atmospheric, Photek-tasting soup. "Soul Message" sounds like jazz drummer Art Blakey trying to shoo away a huge bumblebee buzzing in his studio—talk about scattered snares! *Tomas*

**LEFTFIELD LABEL PROFILE: HEFTY RECORDS**



Lo-fi, laptop, highlife and hip-hop all live comfortably at John Hughes' Hefty home. The Chicago-based beatmaker runs a musical United Nations where Ghanaian singers, revitalized jazz-funk trombonists, Motor City rappers and even avant-garde cellists converse in a polyglot slang that Hughes readily understands. Launched in 1995, his label has issued indie rock from Aluminum Group, Euphone and The Sea & Cake, touched on glitch beats with A Grape Dope and Savath & Savalas and unearthed jazz from Phil Ranelin and Dan Boadi. The Immediate Action singles series hosted techno tracks by Retina.IT, Twine and Process. Hefty's flagship artists, Telefon Tel Aviv and Hughes' own Slicker, both have stunning new albums out that equally reflect contemporary pop, hip-hop and electronic music as well as pervert it. On Slicker's *We All Have a Plan*—his fourth album—human forms (sultry jazz vocals, acoustic instruments) are tossed around with Hughes' digital ephemera (choppy beats, sound effects, static, insect recordings) in a salad that's less cut 'n' paste than edit and mold. The result is an recording full of rhythmic u-turns and bewildering Beat-poet lyrics—a mix as varied and extraordinary as the rest of the Hefty's UN assembly. And, as you can plainly see in the photo above, like his cinematic dad, Hughes marries his outernationalist skronk with equally arresting visuals. *Tomas* www.heftyrecords.com

**ESG/FREDDIE MAS MORE G.D.M. VOL 5 Tigersushi/FRA/12**

In which a long lost ESG track is unearthed, "Party Music" finds the sisters Scroggins with a proto-house tune that, in a just world, would incite a traffic jam any time cued up. Paired with Freddie Mas' paranoid android funk jam "Paths," Tigersushi proves they've got more goodies up their Parisian sleeves. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

**BAIKONOUR HOT MILK EP Melodic/UK/12**

British producer Baikonour revels in offbeat, quirky melodies on an EP that offers myriad radical reworks. Amon Tobin's Bhangatronic Mix of "Coca Sun" is all jaunty clutter, too dense for its own good, while Gavouna's Warm Oben Mix of "Oben Beg," is a warm, bouncy Giorgio Moroder-influenced disco nouveau track. Topo Gigio's remix of "Calimero Renegade" has a lazy, carnival vibe, and Zap 210 (Monomix) by Imitation Electric Piano is a twinkly treat, sounding like Morricone and Manitoba. *Tim Pratt*

**DYKEHOUSE CHAINSMOKING Ghostly International/US/7**

How does one categorize shoe-gazing, humorous, fun, hooky, bouncy rock that has a slight electro overtone? You don't, you just drop the needle and wallow in the gorgeous, self-conscious grooviness of both sides of this sterling 45. File between The Undertones, The Ramones, Fischerspooner and Wire. *Chris Orr*

**DAEDELUS MEANWHILE ERAST GOOD AIR Laboratory Instinct/US/CD**

Continuing his whimsical plunderphonia, "Meanwhile" finds Daedelus in

rare form, skewering dancehall, easy listening and hip-hop into a shimmering Technicolor shish kebab. Nika "Erast" Machaidze's "Good Air" relies on more conventional IDM traits but the inclusion of acoustic guitar promises new directions. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

**DONNA SUMMER Mirex/US/7**

More samplecore from the current reigning heavyweight champ: Jason Forrest. Here, he sends bits of Styx, David Bowie, Iggy Pop and Black Sabbath colliding through a corridor of lock-grooved chaos that spirals giddily into a terrified but willing universe. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

**PULSE PROGRAMMING TULSA FOR ONE SECOND REMIX SERIES VOL. 1 Aesthetics/US/12**

The crisp, contemplative IDM of PulseProgramming gets a coolly minimal makeover on this two-song remix record. Schneider TM's take on "Suck Or Run" adds a kooky, twangy sort of mellow vibe with an Old West flavor. Berlin's Static sculpts more of atmospheric element with the dark "Off To Do Showery Snapshots Remix" and is the better of the two. *Tim Pratt*

**LEROY HANGHOFER OVERTURE Gomma/GER/12**

Berlin's Munk boys reprise some of last year's overlooked White Trash album, throw some new beats onboard and prove that they're still making great tracks that should've been made in early '80s NYC. It's all about the technology. And the drugs, of course. *Alexis Georgopoulos*



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**FUTURE JAZZ  
GUEST REVIEWS:  
GREYBOY**



The early '90s was a glorious time for hip-hop. Heady experimentation with live jazz and DJ-driven beats produced classic albums like the Brand New Heavies' *Heavy Rhyme Experience: Vol. 1* and Guru's *Jazzmatazz*. DJ Smash had his seminal *Fat Jazzy Grooves* EP series and a young beatmaker from San Diego named Greyboy became the first artist to sign up on the fledgling Ubiquity label. 100,000 copies of his groundbreaking *Freestylin'* LP later, Greyboy releases his fourth full-length, *Soul Mosaic*; his most fully accomplished work to date, with contributions from Sharon Jones, Bart Davenport, Bing Ji Ling, rapper Mainflo and DJs D-Styles and Ricci Rucker. It's a beautiful piece of forward-thinking soul—hard enough to rock a prime-time dance-floor but groovy enough for the bedroom. **Top-One** [www.ubiquityrecords.com](http://www.ubiquityrecords.com)

**GENE HARRIS LOS ALAMITOS LATIN FUNKLOVESONG (BUGZ IN THE ATTIC RMX) Blue Note/US/12**

This is one of those perfect "end of the night" songs, with its uplifting vibe and smooth production. The remix side starts slow and smooth; halfway through, it shifts and ends in an uptempo bang. This track is also good for scratching double time over the first half. Not sure about the retail copy, but the promo is blue vinyl. Nice! **Greyboy**

**GHOST CAULDRON FEAT. APANI B FLY WHOLE WORLD K71/US/12  
BEATFANATIC ELECTROMAGNETIC COLORS Raw Fusion/SWE/12**

Three tracks that use more samples per square inch than I've ever done, and that's saying something. Good middle-of-the-night crowd-rockin' stuff, the pick of the crop being the Rhodes-driven "Raw!" Raw Fusion is a tight 12" label from Sweden and always worth checkin'. **Greyboy**

**LIZZ FIELDS WHEN I SEE LOVE  
Unisex/UK/12  
DKD FUTURE RAGE  
Bitasweet-2000 Black/UK/12**

Two lovely long-time white label boogie jams finally see the light of day. Singer Lizz Fields' slowish, shimmering, acoustic guitar-ridden jam gets sped into sunny midtempo territory by man-of-the-hour Ty, while her "Say The Word" gets semi-bossa jazzed by your boys Yam Who. Meanwhile, Dego, Kaidi and Domu give you that classic, snappy, broken-beat vocal anthem to die for—"shhhhhifting everyday," indeed. **Top notch. Ron Nachmann**

**NU:LOGICS ON + ON  
Hospital/UK/7**

The label with the red door comes through again with "On + On" from Cambridge's Nu:Logics, a nod to Brazilian drum & bass with melodic chords and dark but soulful bassline biz. "Ritz" from JFB starts with a loungey bounce, then adds the drums and rolling basslines...and it's all over before you can say "more please!" **Velanche**

**NICKODEMUS FEAT. CAROL C  
CLEOPATRA IN NEW YORK  
DJ ANGOLA FEAT. IGO  
MANZANERO BAILALO  
Wonderwheel/US/12**

NYC producer Nickodemus launches his Wonderwheel imprint with two promising slabs. On "Cleopatra," he twirls Carol C's wordless ululations amongst oud and flute accents in a downtempo frame, while the flipside's "Patient With the World" spotlights Jay Collins's trilling flute and gets the stripped-down dub treatment by Ticklah. Angola's "Bailalo" drops Latin

accents into hypnotic Afrobeat bass and horn lines, with a shuffling, aired out Quantic mix on the flip. Primo new-world ish. **Ron Nachmann**

**JODY WATLEY THE ESSENCE  
FiveSix/US/12  
VANESA FREEMAN  
SHADES SAMPLER  
Chillifunk/UK/12**

How many broken beat singers can boast of being in the game since '77? Former Soul Train dancer, Shalamar vocalist and Grammy winner Jody Watley can. Her experience shines on this cool, confident, sensual single, where the original mix, plus remixes by DJ Yell and GB, mirror the tuneful songwriting of Agent K and the multifaceted production aesthetics of Mark de Clive-Lowe. Another veteran talent, London's Vanessa Freeman, tips us to the wealth of her album *Shades* with three perfect, real soul numbers. **Tomas**

**THE DEAL NEW LAND  
WAIWAN INTERSTELLAR  
Earth Project/UK/12**

Earth Project has been gathering steam since forming in '99 and issuing tracks by Uschi Classen, The Amalgamation of Soundz and Everyday People. The Deal's Dominic "DJD" Dawson and Alcides Sousa grab every Afro-Latin percussion instrument in the studio and shake 'em for all they're worth over an uptempo beat as sweaty and relentless as Spiritual South's smash "Green Gold." And honestly I can't get enough of Wai Wan's vibrant, new space-age broken boogie number. Roy Ayers meets 4hero? That good or better. **Tomas**



**LUCKY 13  
BY TOPH ONE**

I'm sorry, I can't do a decent intro this month, because allergies have taken over my life. No, I've gotta go because I'm Jimmy Kimmel's guest co-host this week. No really, I'm late for a Balanchine ballet at the War Memorial Opera House. Actually, the role of "Colum" this month will be played by "A List." Lots of killer tunes this spring, so get out there and make it happen. And remember—Fun wants to be free!

**1. PROZACK TURNER DEATH, TAXES & PROZACK (self/US/CD)** You ain't shit if you're not banging this Foreign Legion MC's solo joint. After DreamWorks' disintegration, there was a danger that this gem (featuring production from Pete Rock, Supa Dave West, DJ Design, Madlib, Jay Dilla, Alchemist and Jake One) would gather dust in some lawyer's closet; that is, until Prozack got proactive and started slinging the damn things from the last car on the 5:45PM Richmond-bound BART train. Fucking genius. And speaking of Bay Area mass transit—look out for Top'R (Lords crew) trading his latest, *Burning the Candle at Both Ends* (self/US/CD) for malt liquor in the back seats of any SamTrans bus.

**2. BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE "HARMONY" (Cabaret/US/12)** Vintage Pal Joey. As the one-sheet says: "drum machines and keyboards printed to two-inch tape". This is as gorgeous as house music gets. Moody and beautiful and so New York it hurts. Plus the ultra-scarce b-side ("I Got the Rhythm") is more than worth whatever you have to pay.

**3. DR. DELAY "THE LIMITATIONS" EP (Funk Weapons/US/12)** Breaky, funky mid-tempo hotness for fans of Tummy Touch and old school DJ Food. The "Allgood Krook Remix" is already getting a heavy workout next to Treva Whateva and Major Force at the Wednesday Social.

**4. PAUL NICE VS. JAY-Z THE (UNOFFICIAL) BLACK ALBUM REMIX (self/US/CD)** As if his slamming remix of Greyboy's "Got To Be A Love" wasn't enough, Poughkeepsie's finest just went and crushed the competition with his take on The Black Album. Peep his "Moment of Clarity" versus Portishead or "99 Problems" versus Kool G Rap. Woowowwwwwwwww. Just blow the hell up, already!

**5. SOUND IN COLOR (US/label)** Every so often I latch onto a label and just gobble up everything they put out, playing their tracks to death and shamelessly plugging them every chance I get. Make way for Sound in Color. Their *Mu.Sic* compilation is a downtempo masterpiece, a landmark akin to Mo' Wax's first *Headz* comp, and Ricci Rucker and Mike Boo's "ScetchBook" pushes turntablism as far as it's ever been pushed. Epic.

**6. DESMOND WILLIAMS "EASTWEST HIGHWAY EP" (Rhythm & Culture/US/12)** Where Thievery Corporation usually bores me to drinking vodka crans alone in a corner, this cat here makes some bouncy, jangly Sunday evening dancing tunes! "Late Night (Early Flight)" is my jammy-jam, but the lover's rock of "A Right to be Wrong" is a beauty, too. On that same vibe is Down to the Bone's killer "The Flow," with remixes by Bugz in the Attic's Agent K and a boss samba groove from Mr. Gone. Tasty treats, indeed.

**7. DEFINITIVE JUX PRESENTS III (Def Jux/US/3xLP)** All the heaviness you would expect from El-P's camp. Outstanding tracks from Murs (and grab his latest LP!), Rob Sonic, Carnage, Hangar 18 and the slamming first single "Medical Aid" by The Perceptionists (Mr. Lif, Acrobatic and Faks One). As Buster Poindexter said, "Hot, hot, hot!"

**8. THE FREE DESIGN REDESIGNED (Light in the Attic/US/12)** Is this "folktronica"? What the fuck is that? These are some old '60s mod/folk/hippies remixed by current day mod/folk/hippies like Madlib and PeanutButter Wolf. The most playable cut, from a hip-hop/beathead standpoint, is the Sharpshooters' excellent take on "Don't Turn Away". If your name is Tiki Jim, or J-Boogie—you need this record.

**9. TRACK & FIELD ALL THE WAY, ALL THE TIME (Codek/US/CD)** See? Here I go talking about Codek again and I didn't even want to because I didn't want to seem like I'm on their balls or anything, but damn! This shit is lovely. It makes me want to hang art on my bare-ass walls, fix a nice cucumber salad and live a better life.

**10. TAJAI POWER MOVEMENT (Hiero Imperium/US/CD)** I like to drive around with Mike the Barber and test new CDs. If Spyse Mike and his darlin' pitbull Teeta can rock to it, then it passes the test. Souls of Mischief kingpin Tajai passes the test. He shines best when teamed up with Hiero partners Domino, Pep Love, A-Plus and Casual, but the second single "Do It" by Skitzo is on point too. Respect due.

**11. HEURISTIC AUDIO DEATH OF A STAR (Satamile/US/12)** Holy Jesus, this shit hits hard! All the way from East London, these are hard electro breaks suitable for big warehouse soundsystems. The title track and "Wisla" are my jams—all crisp production with enormous low-end and some spaced out effects. If I dread my goatee and start wearing SilverLucy Designs blame records like this.

**12. MASS HYSTERIA IT AIN'T SAFE (Rhymesayers/US/12)** Just file this under "Hip-Hop I Can't Leave Home Without" along with Ohmega Watts' "A Request" (Ubiquity), Wildchild's "Wonder Years" (Stonesthrow), Belles in Monica's "Skitzophonetic" (New Dawn-UK) and Micranots' "Glorious" (Rhymesayers). Dope, dope, dope—all of 'em.

**LUCKY 13 (SF/119 Utah at 15 St)** The latest nightlife venture from Pete Glickstern, creator of Liquid, Club 6ix and Light. Beautiful old warehouse space with high ceilings and a cozy backroom and bar. Killer graffiti by Buter (TMF), and if the thump sounds familiar, that's because it's the soundsystem from the deceased Townsend space. Bet.

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## IN THE STUDIO BLOCKHEAD

NEW YORK'S MINIMALIST BEAT MAKER SHOWS XLR8R WHAT PRODUCTION TRICKS HE'S GOT TUCKED UNDER HIS CAP.

Words: Matthew Newton Photograph: Maya Hayuk



The key to Blockhead's studio, the ASR-10 sampler

Blockhead (born Tony Simon) is sheepish about claiming the spotlight. He's the type of individual who prefers the quiet isolation of a basement studio—a place where ideas can be conveyed through expressive percussion, emotive strings, and chopped up samples. But with the release of *Music By Cavelight*, his debut instrumental album on Ninja Tune, it seems that recognition, and yes, public interest will soon catch up with the Greenwich Village native.

After a short stint as an emcee, Simon began tooling with beats in 1995. But it wasn't until several years later, after joining forces with friend and fellow New Yorker Aesop Rock that a distinct style evolved. Simon's minimal and multi-layered productions were the sibling counterpart to Ace's rabid rhyme schemes. And after cutting his teeth crafting beats for Aesop's *Float* (Mush; 2000) and the critically acclaimed *Labor Days* (Definitive Jux; 2001) album, listeners started taking notice and wondering just who was pulling the musical strings.

**XLR8R: What inspired the title of your new album *Music By Cavelight*?**

Blockhead: Basically, two things: One was that the overall vibe of the album is pretty dark but not in a weird sci-fi way. It's more melancholy. So I thought a play on the phrase "music by candlelight" was fitting, 'cause while the album's kinda dark, it's also somewhat romantic at times. The second inspiration is that I make all my beats in my apartment. My studio is in my bedroom that happens to be underground in the basement. The only light (besides the one on the ceiling) is this little window in the corner that's about a foot tall. It's got a definite cave atmosphere to it.

**XLR8R: Before you start a project, do you have a particular theme or concept in mind?**

B: Not really. It's during the process of picking beats that any theme really shapes up. I definitely look for beats that I think would compliment each other but beyond that, the themes come out later.

**XLR8R: What type of gear are you using in your current production set up?**

B: I'm a very minimalist producer (i.e. lazy and unwilling to learn new things). All I use is my ASR 10 sampler. I record on Pro Tools but I don't have it in my crib or know how to use it. My home set-up is literally a sampler, a turntable, a CD player and speakers.



**XLR8R: What alterations do you need to make to your production set-up when performing live?**

B: Hmm... none, [because] I don't really have a live set yet. My live show that I've done so far has just been me playing records. I'm really more concerned with making the music then performing it.

**XLR8R: You seem to use both samples and live instrumentation interchangeably. Do you consciously blend the two elements?**

B: Yeah. It makes it more fun to add live instruments as long as I don't go overboard with it. I have some close friends that are really talented musicians so it was an obvious direction for me. Ideally, I'd like the listener to not be able to tell what's played and what's sampled.

**XLR8R: How do you approach the songwriting process?**

B: I usually just sit down in front of my sampler and go through records. When I find a sample that I like, I build off that. However, there have been many occasions when I can't find anything I like and I make some drums first.

**XLR8R: In the album's liner notes you give a shout out "to every record store that has deep dollar bins." How much does the tone of your production rely on obscure vinyl?**

B: A lot. Obscure is good but obscure and cheap is great. I've never spent more than five bucks on a record. Records are like baseball cards. They are only worth a lot to people who collect them. So some guy may buy an obscure record of Nordic flute music for 45 bucks but in all reality, it's a shitty album that isn't worth anything to anyone else. So I cut all that bullshit out and just buy records that cost a dollar. I still find dope samples and I save money for food and alcohol.

**XLR8R: As a producer, you've established a distinct sound. What production techniques do you employ when working on an album?**

B: To me, it's all about layering and sequencing. A lot of instrumental hip-hop is pretty boring because the changes are too subtle or too rare. I try to make beats that have so many elements weaving in and out of them that they never get boring.

*Music by Cavelight* is out now on Ninja Tune. [www.ninjatune.net](http://www.ninjatune.net)

## SHORT CIRCUITS CALIBRE

BELFAST'S NUMBER ONE DUB AND DRUM & BASS WIZARD MAKES QUALITY BREAKBEAT GEMS THAT ARE BUILT TO LAST.

Words: Vivian Host Photograph: Simon King

Belfast's Dominic Martin is one of the quietest people in drum & bass, but every time he puts a new track to CD-R he causes an earthquake-sized rumble that emanates from his home in Belfast, Ireland, all the way down to the jungle's epicenter in London. He's one of the few artists who has managed to bridge the gap between all styles of drum & bass, making his records feature prominently in the sets of all the top DJs and giving his music a shelf-life far longer than d&b's standard six-week rinse.

A former violinist and punk drummer, Martin started making drum & bass in 1995; he was such a perfectionist that his early tunes sound insanely tight, despite the fact that they were recorded live onto an eight-track rather than sequenced. A few years later, he got the computer up and running and soon delivered a double album's worth of heavy-breathing liquid funk for Fabio's Creative Source label (2001's *Musique Concrète*). His ability to coax warm, pulsing analog sounds out of digital tools and his riveting use of bass made the entire scene take notice.

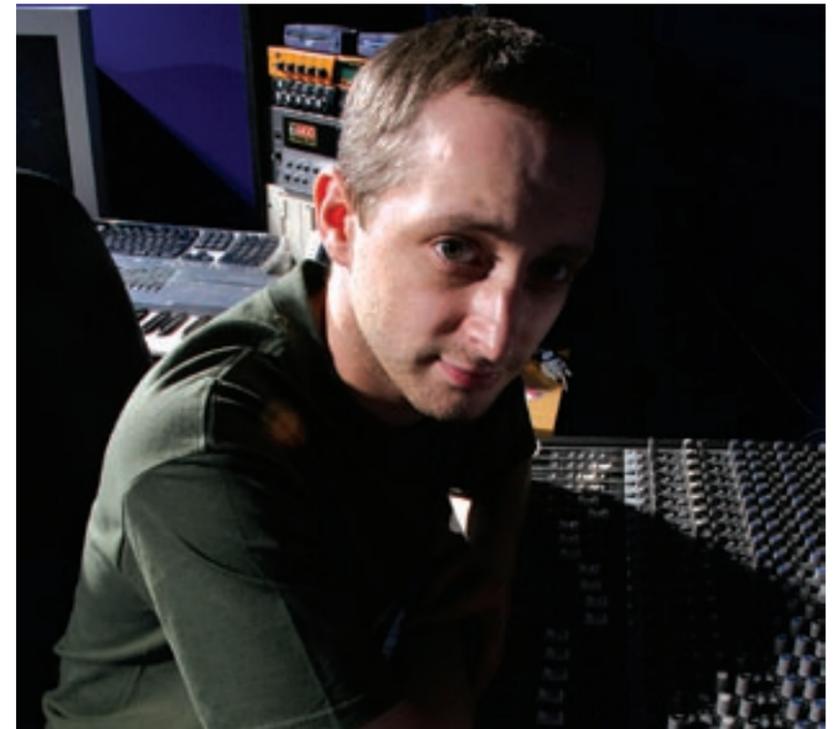
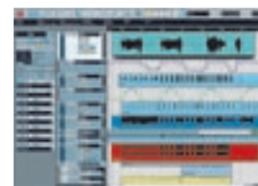
Martin's since gone from strength to strength, collaborating with Manchester's Marcus Intalex and ST Files as Mist:I:Cal—listen to their riveting dub epic "Mistical Dub" and soaring house-tinged "Love Thing" (both on Soul:R Records)—and turning in ridiculously anthemic remixes for High Contrast, Badmarsh & Shri and r&b star Jaheim. In June of last year, he launched his own imprint, Signature Records, in between turning out sophisticated house and downtempo cuts for friend John Tejada's Palette label. We caught him in between busy studio moments to quiz him about sound, space and bass.

**XLR8R: What has been the biggest turning point for you musically so far?**

Dominic Martin: I suppose that would've been when I started to go to raves in Belfast in the early to mid-'90s; I was about 17. I was taking in a lot of different styles because back then [rave music] was a mish-mash of sounds. The whole experience of the crowds and drugs was another factor, and that really made me determined to make music for a DJ to play to those crowds. For me, that was the real change—to follow a path, so to speak.



The main components of Calibre's studio, Cubase and the Juno 60



**XLR8R: How has your background—playing violin and then drums—influenced you and what you make?**

DM: I was in an Irish group in school where I moved from tin whistle to violin, and running the gauntlet into school with a violin under your arm was not a pleasurable experience at my school. It was deemed a bit soft, so I found rock 'n' roll and I started to play drums in bands around Belfast. I ended up making electronic music because it was close to composing, and because of my drum background I got into d&b. I love rhythm, and the rest is history.

**XLR8R: What was the first song you ever fell in love with?**

DM: I think it might have been "Message in a Bottle" by The Police.

**XLR8R: You are known for having a very dub-oriented sound, particularly in your basslines. What do you use to achieve that sound?**

DM: I love listening to older styles of production and arrangements. I just like deeper styles of bass—bass allows the music to breathe, and then the whole process of making the track becomes more instinctive and more natural. As to how I obtain my basslines, I use synths and everything just like everybody else. It's all about what you take from what you've got.

**XLR8R: What inspires you about dub/reggae music and what artists do you like?**

DM: There's loads I like: The Scientist, King Tubby, Lee Perry, Jackie Mittoo, Gregory Issacs, The Heptones. I could go on for a long time. I also love a lot of ska from the early '80s, and more contemporary styles from the Rhythm & Sound and Half Moon labels. As to why I like it, it has everything: soul, rhythms, stories, funk, beats. It rolls, basically.

**XLR8R: What studio equipment do you use?**

DM: I've got a simple set up: an Akai 2000, Cubase, synths and a few effects and processing bits, plus a Juno 60.

**XLR8R: Production-wise, what tip would you give newer producers?**

DM: Keep it simple.

**XLR8R: Do you think that your environment and upbringing in Belfast has influenced the sound or message of your music?**

DM: Yes, but it's difficult for me to explain why. It's where I live, so I'm probably too close to the subject, but dealing with politics at an early age gives you an edge for the bullshit. In that respect Belfast has suffered, but the people here are unique because of those hardships. Music for me has to have a character and soul unique to it. But if there is a message, I'm yet to find out what it is.

[www.signature-records.com](http://www.signature-records.com)

## TECHNOLUST JUKEBOX

**XLR8R'S MOST GEAR-OBSSESSED STAFF MEMBER, ANDREW SMITH, TELLS YOU HOW TO CREATE A HOME MUSIC SERVER WITH THE SQUEEZEBOX MP3 PLAYER.**

**"I FELT A RENEWED RUSH OF TECHNOLOGIST AND ALL OF A SUDDEN MY PATH WAS MADE CLEAR."**

A few months back I had hit the technolust wall. After setting up my wireless network at home, acquiring both Xbox and PS2 consoles for "editorial purposes," throwing an extra hard drive in my Tivo for 140 hours of recording time, and realizing that I only watch about three of the 200+ channels on my satellite TV, I wasn't sure what to want next. During the late-'90s tech boom, it was common to hear the geek elite bragging about how they would one day convert all their CDs to mp3s and stream them throughout their homes. Recently, I stumbled across a few doodads that make this fantasy a reality. I felt a renewed rush of technolust and all of a sudden my path was made clear.

There are a few elements required when creating a home music server. You'll need a network at home, either hard-wire Ethernet or wireless; a stereo system of some sort that can accept either traditional analog, digital coaxial or optical inputs; a computer running OS X, Windows or Linux; and most importantly you'll need a box to pull your mp3s off your computer and over your network to stream them through your stereo. Of all these items, the mysterious box has been the missing link in the puzzle, but over the last year quite a number of first-generation home media servers have emerged. Some of these players plug in to your TV with on-screen interfaces and stream everything from video to still images to audio. Others are more like traditional pieces of stereo equipment. Of all the riff-raff, the **Slim Devices Squeezebox** stands out the most with its reliable performance and cross-platform compatibility.

The Squeezebox was first introduced about two years ago as the SlimP3 player, one of the first of its kind on the market. Not only did these guys get a head start on the technology, but they did it with class. The SlimServer software that sits on your computer is totally open-source, with OS X, Windows and Linux versions; and these guys donate 10% of their profits to the internet freedom fighters at the Electronic Frontier Foundation. The newest version of the Squeezebox supports mp3, AAC, Ogg Vorbis, FLAC

or uncompressed .wav and .aiff audio files. For you iTunes-heads out there, you'll be happy to know that this is one of the only players that supports the iTunes AAC format. You can also control the player from any web browser in your network and link up to 12 of these bad boys to the same server. Respect!

After checking out the glowing reviews on the Squeezebox, I discovered that Slim Devices was going to be at MacWorld (held annually at the Moscone Convention Center in downtown San Francisco) and I raced down there. I found my buddy who works at Apple, and we cornered the Slim Devices crew with a frenzied, frothy look about us. After firing off a string of questions and trying to concoct all sorts of theoretical barter scenarios, I was promised a Squeezebox after the show (at which they won MacWorld Best Of Show 2004).

When my Squeezebox arrived, it took me all of five minutes to get it up and running. I installed the software on my computer and stuck the Squeezebox on top of my TV in my entertainment center. It linked up instantly to my wireless network, assigned itself an IP and found my entire collection of mp3s. It was such an exciting experience to browse my entire collection via remote control in the comfort of my living room; the two-line display is bright and easy to read, and this thing flips from song to song much faster than a CD player.

Of course, encoding your collection to whatever file format you prefer is going to be a big project of your own (and perhaps the subject of another article), but you'll find it gets pretty exciting to see your total number of music files grow and grow. And most importantly you can brag to your friends about how many gigs of music you've got in your collection! Now I find myself spending more time doing constructive things like writing this review and casually listening to music, without the hassle of hunting through my stacks of CDs. My lust has finally subsided. *Andrew Smith*

**MSRP: \$249 wired or \$299 wireless; www.slimdevices.com**



**"THIS FILTER IS CAPABLE OF SLOW AND LUMINOUS SWEEPS TO AN AGGRESSIVE, GLASS-SMASHING UPPER REGISTER ROAR."**

### I TAKE MINE BLACK

At first glance **Analogue Solutions Black Coffee** looks more like an industrial toaster than a hot synth, but a deeper look reveals its expansive properties. Black Coffee monosynth incorporates the versatility of the mammoth modular synths of years past in a compact and stylish case. Internally, it's all hard-wired analog without the use or control of a software-based DSP. In addition, a MIDI buss has been added making for ease of use with any sequencer or MIDI controller currently available.

Black Coffee's true power lies within the unique modulation routing and warm yet stable oscillators. Combing a true VCO, a massively wide spread LFO, a sharp envelope generator, and all the control voltage patch points for all these synthesis parameters, you will hardly be short on audio creativity. Taming the colossal harmonic overtone content and shading the proper color of sound is a four-pole Moog ladder-type filter. Patched and routed correctly, this filter is capable of slow and luminous sweeps to an aggressive, glass-smashing upper register roar.

Located on the back panel of this box is a filter-in socket enabling the Black Coffee to be a flexible effect unit for microphones, drums or any other patchable audio source. With some creative routing, the synthesis possibilities are endless and audio diversity is as bold as a hot cup of java—no cream or sugar needed. *Praxis*

**MSRP: \$595; www.analoguesolutions.com**

### QUICKIE MACSENSE HOMEPOD



One of the more physically attractive home mp3 players on the market, the HomePod will stream audio from your computer to your stereo with minimum effort. Like many other players at the moment, this player is in its first generation and has a few kinks, but it separates itself from the competition by coming with an FM tuner, built-in speakers and a USB port for memory-card readers or USB hard drives. *Andrew Smith*

**Pros:** Sexy remote control, Mac and PC compatible, mp3, AAC, .wav and WMA file support  
**Cons:** Won't play audio files while browsing, display difficult to read from a distance

**MSRP: \$249; www.macsense.com**

# ANNOUNCEMENT THE NEW INDUSTRY STANDARD HAS FINALLY ARRIVED



**"The ST/STR8-150 is undeniably a superior turntable to the recently upgraded Technics Mark 5G"**  
*David Eserin, DJmag review, July 2003*  
5 out of 5 stars

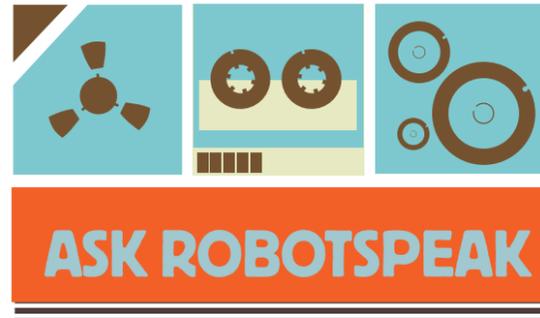


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XLR8R's readers pose their perplexing gear questions to the music technology experts at SF's RobotSpeak computer music shop. Send questions to [askrobotspeak@xlr8r.com](mailto:askrobotspeak@xlr8r.com) and your answer will appear in next issue!

Dear RobotSpeak,  
Some of my more knowledgeable music producer friends can throw around names of vintage synths like sports stats—they know every make and model of Roland, Moog and Yamaha, and some of them even have a bunch of vintage analog monsters in their studio. I'm just getting into the whole production thing, and I know a bunch of these older synths have been reissued as soft-synth programs and plug-ins. Can you recommend the best, or most versatile of the bunch, for basic electronic music making purposes?  
Thanks,  
Aaron Jackson, Lawrence, KS

RobotSpeak responds [pt. 1]:  
Aaron,  
I admittedly began my love affair with synths just as the Yamaha DX-7 was "evolutionizing" electronic music in the mid-'80s. The fully digital DX series promised a better future for all of us, a world where sparkling clean digital synthesizers ruled. We could leave to museums the inherit instability and unpredictable grittiness of those fussy analog Cro-Magnons. I, for a time, bought into the propaganda and largely ignored analog in my formative years.

Despite all the lofty promises of fully digital synthesis, however, analog synthesizers have survived to prosper. While today my geriatric DX-7 idles lonely and abandoned in a friend's garage, vintage synths are living large. Analog instruments from Moog, Sequential Circuits, Oberheim and Roland from the late '70s and early '80s are collected and cherished.

If you want the closest approximation to real analog, then listen no further than Arturia's Moog Modular V. A software reproduction of the original Moog Modular [complete with swinging patch cables], the Modular V, although quite versatile, can be a bit difficult to patch. We have heard reports of bugginess with the Modular as well, particularly on the Mac OSX. I should note that the latest version seems to run solidly under Panther on our store machine. Also from Arturia is the CS-80 V, a complete rebuild of the original Yamaha poly-synth made mythical by the likes of Keith Emerson and Vangelis [our friend Gus from Cybrid gets excited right about now]. The CS-80 V is quite a bit easier to patch quickly than the Modular V, and both sound astonishingly close to the real thing.

Alan  
RobotSpeak

Part 2 of Alan's recommendations next issue.

## POWER BOOK

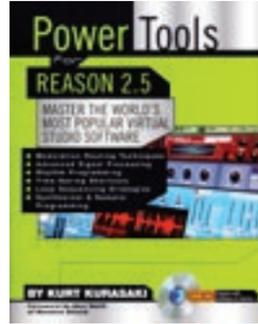
Kurt Kurasaki's new book, *Power Tools For Reason 2.5* (Backbeat Books; softcover, \$24.95), is like the Dungeon Master's Guide to Propellerheads' popular studio software. Just when you thought you knew a thing or two about Reason, Kurasaki explains methods to get more out of your app.

Unlike, say, a guide book to solving the Rubik's Cube, where you are guaranteed to have the thing dialed in a couple of tries, *Power Tools* leaves you with more mysteries for your imagination to unravel. And this ain't *Reason For Dummies*—don't expect every bit of terminology involved with the program to be explained. Rather, Kurasaki abbreviates his steps to damn near text message brevity ("adjust osc 1 cent setting to 0, set the mod rate to 1/8" etc.). But since anything you point your arrow cursor at in Reason triggers a tiny pop-up telling you what the knob or fader is, you won't get lost—except in devouring tips.

The book covers essential shortcuts, weird wire routes, "chaining" (stringing together several mixers or devices), Vocoder techniques, delay tools, drum pattern methods and just what the hell the Spider Merger/Splitter is useful for.

The book comes with a CD packed with demos, samples and tools that can be used for the pages and pages of step-by-step how-to's. And homeboy's an expert; his peff.com site has loads of freebies and tips for Reason users. John Herndon from Tortoise and Massive Attack programmer Alex Swift sing the book's praises. One thing you'll need, though, is time. These concepts eat up mega clock. Still, most of us have forgotten how to read books anyway, so maybe this will help. *Tomas*

MSRP: \$24.95; [www.backbeatbooks.com](http://www.backbeatbooks.com)



"THESE CONCEPTS EAT UP MEGA CLOCK."

## ALL TOGETHER NOW

Do a Google search on the word "intact" and screaming back at you is everything you ever wanted to know about circumcision. **Native Instruments Intakt**, on the other hand, has nothing to do with foreskin, although it might have something to do with foreplay. Like other NI software, Intakt helps you get a sample hot and lathered before you get down 'n' dirty in the mix.

The program is best used with conventional sequencing programs such as Cubase, ProTools or Logic, but is also useful as a stand-alone program, for instance, to power live performances. So why call it Intakt—a name that evokes completeness? Because Intakt actually does combine the features of applications like Propellerheads' ReCycle and Dr. Rex, plus aspects of Bias' Peak all in one environment. Intakt gives the user a place to drag and drop samples, add effects, time-stretch them, sync them to other samples etc. without the hassles of using several separate software tools to do this.

It works like this: you drag a sample into Intakt's Source Edit window, or down onto its keyboard layout, then you manipulate the sample using the Beat Machine (a killer slice editor), the Time Machine (for stretching and tempo changes), or the many filters included (ping-pong delay, distortion, filter). You go mad-crazy warping your loop, then—boom!—drop that shit into a song in progress in your sequencer and it syncs right up. On the downside, Intakt's memory-intensive techno- and trance-driven sound library will be, for the most part, useless to all but novice producers. For the rest, you'll want to build up your own library of .wav, .aiff, .snd, .nki, .exs and even Dr. Rex files to use with the software. And don't expect the program's hardcopy manual to answer all your questions—it's an unusually brief starters' guide, and the rest you have to decipher by trial and error and on-line support. Boo!

But will you have better sex as a result of being intact, or, in this case, using Intakt? I can't speak for you, but it's always good to have more sensations! *Derek Grey*

MSRP: \$229; [www.native-instruments.com](http://www.native-instruments.com)

"BUT WILL YOU HAVE BETTER SEX AS A RESULT OF BEING INTACT, OR, IN THIS CASE, USING INTAKT?"



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London's Love Limited uses Victorian imagery and natural wonders to give drug-addled clubbers something to think about.



Hands in the air. Buxom blondes in fluffy bras. Time-lapse photography of neon lasers shooting through the air. Cartoon fonts. The lexicon of club flyer design in the last 10 years can often read like a treatise on everything that went wrong with the rave scene. Jon Cooke and his partners in the Love design studio have done their fair share of partying too, but their handbills and flyers stray far from the expected. Rather than kooky Photoshop filters and Fajita fonts, Love employs stately typefaces and haunting, handcrafted images to get its point across.

Since the early '80s, Cooke has worked in graphic design for the music industry. He spent a decade at the firm Blue Source, which created such memorable covers as the Chemical Brothers' *Exit Planet Dust* and Leftfield's *Leftism*, which he is particularly proud of. In 2000, he left to start his own company, Love. Operating out of a small but airy office in the trendy Hoxton area—and armed with little more than a tea maker, a boom box and gigantic Mac monitors—Cooke and partners Juan Courtes and Ryan Belmont have since worked for Nike, the BBC and Fabric night-

club; current projects include covers for new albums and singles by Gomez and Nick Holder and work for Ann Arbor, Michigan electro-popsters Ghostly International.

When I turn up at the studio, Belmont is working on cover art for Distinctive's *Y4K Breaks* CD series: The covers feature household objects like irons and coffee pots redone in eye-shattering animal patterns. Cooke is toiling away on the latest campaign for Fabric, whom he started work for soon after their 2000 inception. His beautifully matte handbills and posters for the club—featuring fictitious monsters and images from Neo-Romantic nightmares—are strewn around desks. The Small Faces album *Ogden's Nut Goldflake*, the latest release from Scottish dance punk darlings Franz Ferdinand and *The Very Best of Rod Stewart* are in heavy rotation on the stereo, and a massive shelf of 1940s children's books and dusty tomes full of disturbing Victorian motifs—pigs in top hats dancing with four-leaf clovers in their hooves, heavily-corseted women taking tea—testifies to Cooke's prurient interest in old English illustrators and designers.

In fact, for someone who deals so explicitly with electronic music culture, there's little modern or trendy to Cooke's design sensibility. You won't find any notebook scribbles or Cooper Black fonts; no drips, graffiti influences, or gratuitous hot pink. Neither would you spy headphones, keyboards, decks, pictures of hands in the air, or anything else that explicitly says "DJ." In fact, his favorite record covers are haunting, striking images, such as the art on the *Jaws* soundtrack record and the dreamlike effigy of a burning man in a suit emblazoned on Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here*. Suffice to say, when Cooke stares out his office window, he's dreaming of lush, rolling hills rather than strobe lights and VIP rooms.

"I don't really draw my inspiration from London, it's more when I go out of London into the country," says Cooke, who says his wife is the thing he most prizes. He loves New Zealand, where he got mar-

ried, because "it reminds [him] of what England would have been like 50 years ago, without all the people." Lately, he's been very inspired by a British artist from the 1940s named John Nash, who did paintings of the Essex countryside. And, unlike most Londoners, he doesn't long for limited edition sneakers or a 40G iPod; rather, he covets "a house in the country and a dog."

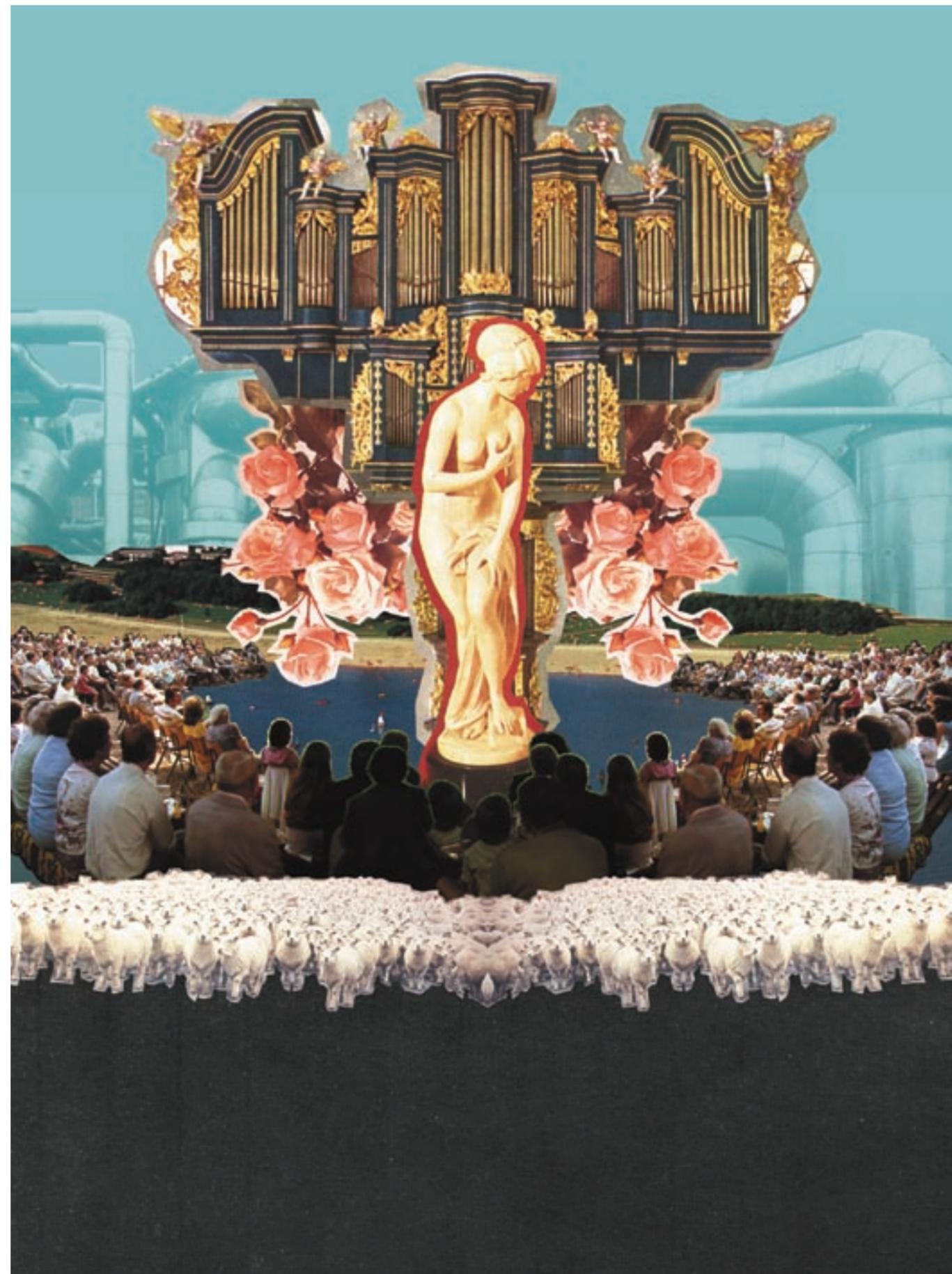
Not surprisingly, many of Cooke's designs focus on the relationship between man and nature, superimposing historical and technological images that force the synapses to draw their own conclusions. His Fabric handbills from late 2002 collage together pictures of futuristic oil refineries and photos of high-tech machines from the 1970s with medieval churches and Mayan ruins. The spring 2004 campaign stretches even further into leftfield with blurry images of ancient statuettes superimposed onto apocalyptic countryside images. Cooke isn't arcane—he just sees software as a means to an end, rather than an inspiration. "The original idea always has to come from the person, not the computer," he explains. "A computer is just a tool the same as a pencil."

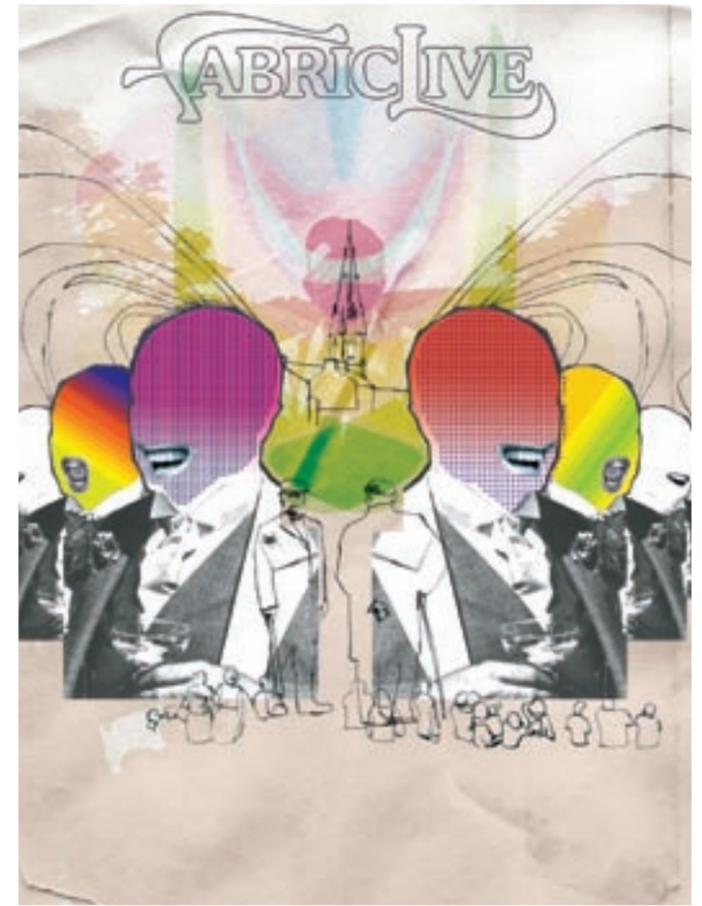
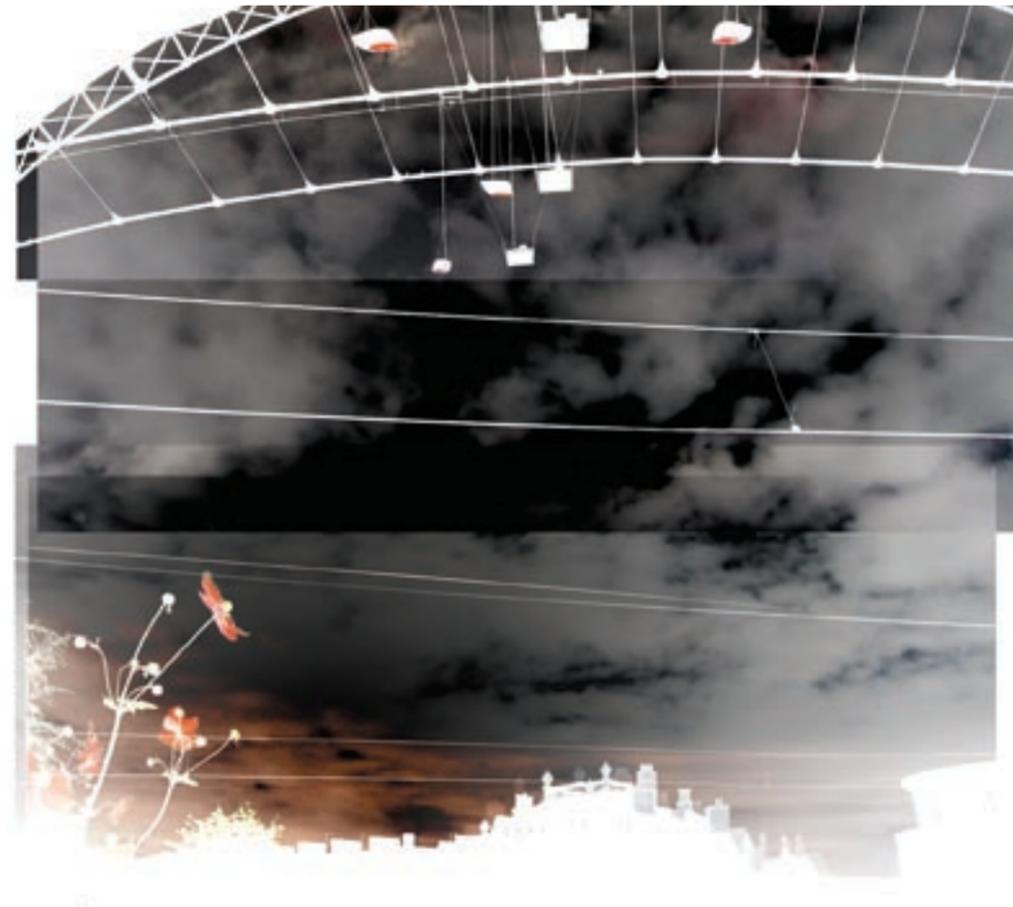
For all Cooke's mouse twiddling, his work for Love retains an organic feel. "I suppose [my work] is kind of a reaction against computer graphics," Cooke says. "I like things that look hand-done, hand-drawn, hand-painted. Being a person who has been into going out to clubs and dancing, [I know the feeling when] someone gives you a bunch of flyers and you're looking at them because you've got nothing to do in the cab on the way home [from the club]. I just like the idea of some kid who's really high from the night getting a flyer with a Victorian woman on it—just to make him stop and look at a Victorian person! We like the idea of that one split-second of giving someone something different to look at."

us@lovelimited.co.uk



Words: Vivian Host  
Illustration (right): Love  
exclusive for XLR8R







**TBC:  
GOLDEN ASIA**  
SF MC PITCHBLACKGOLD IS A  
POET-IN-MOTION WHO SEES THE U.S.  
THROUGH GLOBAL SHADES.  
WORDS AND IMAGES: PITCHBLACK GOLD

I've traveled overseas a couple of times before but I've never experienced such an intense culture shock upon returning "home" like I did after this last journey to the South Pacific. Everything that I appreciate and straight-up despise about this country stuck out like a black titty exposed by white hands at halftime. The clean, hot or cold water I can drink and/or wash with, air that's not competing with dust particles for space in my nose and mouth, toilets that flush, the fact I can kiss the lips of woman in public without hearing the barks of religious sheep dogs—I love it.

Our reliance on email, 2-ways and Friendster, the small value people place on their word, the "movement" that ain't movin', the promotion of Justin Timberlake like he's Marvin Gaye's heir apparent and how completely zombified Americans are by the mass media—I fuckin' can't stand it. It took about two weeks for my spirit to catch up with my body.

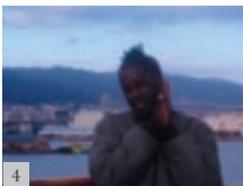
Where was my spirit, you ask? On December 22, 2003, I, along with four other Bay Area artists, got on a flight from SFO to Tokyo. Two days later, we boarded a Japanese cruise ship called Peace Boat, which offers three around-the-world, activist-themed cruises a year. During our three weeks aboard, we traveled to Okinawa, the Phillipines, Brunei and Singapore while conducting workshops on the union of art and activism in creating a personal and collective new reality, culminating with a performance at the 2004 World Social Forum in Mumbai, India.

So much happened during this experience that I could write a book, but for the sake of space, I'll break it down like this:

**The Peace Boat:** Five Bay Area artists were given the title "Artist Ambassadors;" additionally, there were 12 Japan-based non-Japanese English teachers ("GET Teachers"), 13 bilingual staff members, 100 international crewmembers, 40 Japanese social/political activists and 700 non-English-speaking Japanese passengers.

**December 31, 2003:** This was by far the most fun New Years Eve party I've ever experienced. There's absolutely nothing like bringing in the New Year standing on the deck of a ship, surrounded by nothing but ocean. My homie Machingura—a vocalist from Zimbabwe now living in Berkeley—and I touched the mic around 11PM. Backed by the Japanese soul-funk band Tokyo Gyangster, we freestyled a high energy, call-and-response filled set. After us, Queen Pagi, the lead singer of the band, rocked us into the count-down: Ju...Kyu...Hachi...Nana! Number of smooches from cute Japanese ladies: eight. Number of elder Japanese ladies freakin' me on the dance floor at one point: five. Number of people I took pictures with: 200-plus.

**Manila, Philippines:** DJ Shortcut (Triple Threat DJs) was on the same flight to Japan that I was. He was taking a connecting flight to



Manila and said he'd be there DJing at a few locations and we should connect. The first day in Manila was spent entirely in one outdoor location next to a small river that ran through the city. Three of us Artist Ambassadors were scheduled to perform at the festivities that evening.

By show time at sunset, about 500 people had gathered to sing, dance, eat, drink and play. It was truly beautiful. After the show, I got in contact with Shortcut and set up a time to connect later that night. I went back to the boat and I thought I'd take a 15-minute nap. I woke up five hours later. Oh well.

**Muara, Brunei (small country next to Malaysia):** National religion: Islam. Government: The Sultan (one of the richest men on the planet). Mosques: huge. Taxes: none. Medical care: free. Education: free. Alcohol/cigarettes: not sold here (GET teachers lose their minds). Temperature: hotasamufucka! Immigration laws: crazy strict.

**2004 World Social Forum, Mumbai, India (January 16-22nd, 2004):** Fuck the Bush/Blair reptiles! Fuck imperialism! Fuck globalism! 100,000 voices shout for change, march for change, hope for change. Another world is possible, but not with the same thought process that created and sustains this one. Then I see her.

I look in her Dalit fire eyes blazing below a "Cast out the Caste" headband, her sister by her side. 20 more sisters in front of her, 30 more behind her. Vibrant saris of purple. They raise signs, attempting to invite the spirit of Justice to their lives, for Justice hasn't been around in a long time. The Brahmas have it barricaded. Coca-Cola has it locked behind barbed wire fences, along with the community water source.

The sisters cross paths with Tibetans. Monked-out and striking like red-orange lightning, their flags blowing in the wind. They raise signs attempting to invite the spirit of Justice into their lives, for Justice hasn't been there for the 6,000 monasteries destroyed, the one million lives lost. The Chinese government has it locked in a cell, blindfolded with a gun to its head.

The Tibetans cross paths with me, a child of the African Diaspora. Spittin' songs of Spirit, poems of Power and freestyles of Freedom, I rep the unseen oppressed in the US. I ignite the stage to invite the spirit of Justice into all of our lives.

I cross paths with Kumar, spokesman for the Dalit Foundation for Human Rights. We share stories. We share the same struggle. We share the same skin tone. I am an Indian of the Dalit caste. He is an African-American of the ghetto class. We are both attempting to emancipate and invoke Justice, Truth and Peace. Will we succeed?

PitchBlackGold is an MC/poet from San Francisco, CA. His second CD is out summer 2004. His debut album *The Black Insperience* can be purchased at [www.pitchblackgold.com](http://www.pitchblackgold.com). For more info on Peace Boat, visit [www.peaceboat.org](http://www.peaceboat.org).

Pictured above: 1. Taiko drumming aboard the Peace Boat; 2. artwork by Peace Boat traveller Caleb Duarte; 3. guerilla theater demo by a youth organization in Mumbai, India; 4. the author aboard the Peace Boat.

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"I can only explain it as the most interesting, the best, and the most inspiring thing that I have ever been a part of - and that I've ever seen - that had anything to do with electronic music."

- Richie Hawtin (aka Plastikman) on his performance at MUTEK 2003 (Exclaim! Magazine)

"A better world is possible, and the artists and organizers at events like MUTEK prove it."

- Tomas Palermo (editor-in-chief, XLR8R)

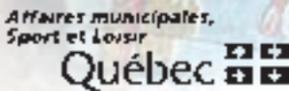


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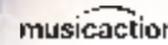
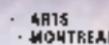
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